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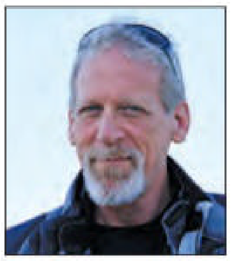

CROSSROADS

BY **GLENN ROBERTS**

THE SHOW MUST GO ON?

Another motorcycle show season has come to an end. I write this the day after the Spring Motorcycle Show in Toronto — the last motorcycle show of the winter season on our schedule. The Spring Show runs pretty late in the winter season and is the third show in Toronto (unbelievably, Toronto used to have four main shows), so by the time this show rolls around, many are either already riding and don't want to be spending a day inside, or have seen enough of motorcycle shows, making for poor attendance.

While we did have a booth at this show, I wasn't there the whole time as Emily and our good friend Natalie were on hand for the weekend. They relayed to me that it was slow enough that a few vendors packed up early and left the venue on both Saturday night and Sunday afternoon before closing. That is a real shame.

A vendor makes the commitment to be at the show and therefore has the obligation to stick it out whether the show is good or bad. It's not fair to the show producer and especially to the attendees who paid good money to get in and see what's on offer, only to find out that some of the vendors packed up and left. In essence, they paid to see a motorcycle show and only got to see a portion of it.

I can't help but think the vendors are shooting themselves in the foot by leaving early and therefore pissing off those who go to purchase something and can't. Will those consumers be back next year?

After 21 years of being a vendor at shows across the country, I'd be the first to agree that the motorcycle shows in Canada aren't what they used to be.

The previous show in February — The MMIC Toronto Motorcycle Show — had become stale over the past few years, but this year, the show's management made some changes for the better, I feel. They introduced an adventure zone called ExPLR Adventure that featured guest speakers all weekend, adventure-specific products and tour companies. Also new this year was the Strider Adventure Zone, where kids 18 months to five years old could experience a push bike in a safe and friendly environment.

Moving up in age was the STACYC kids' demos, which feature small electric bikes that bridge the gap between push bikes and small motorcycles, providing a lightweight, powered riding experience for youngsters.

And adults weren't forgotten either in the Moto Intro First Ride area. Those who registered didn't need a motorcycle licence of any kind — the only requirements were denim-style pants and boots that covered your ankles. Provided were a helmet, jacket and gloves and one-on-one instruction.

Also helping to draw a new crowd was the Clutch Society area of the show, which catered to the local custom motorcycle culture in a laid-back, grassroots home garage vibe.

I really do hope these changes help to bring this show around as it's the only show in Ontario to see all the new bikes in one location. Well, that's not really accurate. Noticeably missing from the Toronto MMIC show were four mainstream manufacturers — BMW, Ducati, Indian and Kawasaki.

Just like vendors packing up early and leaving, manufacturers missing from their own show really upset a lot of people, and I know from talking to a few attendees that some of those manufacturers lost out on at least a couple of sales because they weren't there. We all need to support the industry in any way we can in order to keep this niche market healthy and vibrant for everyone.

As I mentioned earlier, the shows have changed over the years, but I truly hope that they survive, and that the western shows that didn't happen this year will come back with a vengeance. The Toronto MMIC show is trying to stir things up for the better. Things are changing and I, for one, am hoping for a reboot and they all come back stronger than ever. **MM**

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Harley-Davidson 135 cu. in. Crate Engine

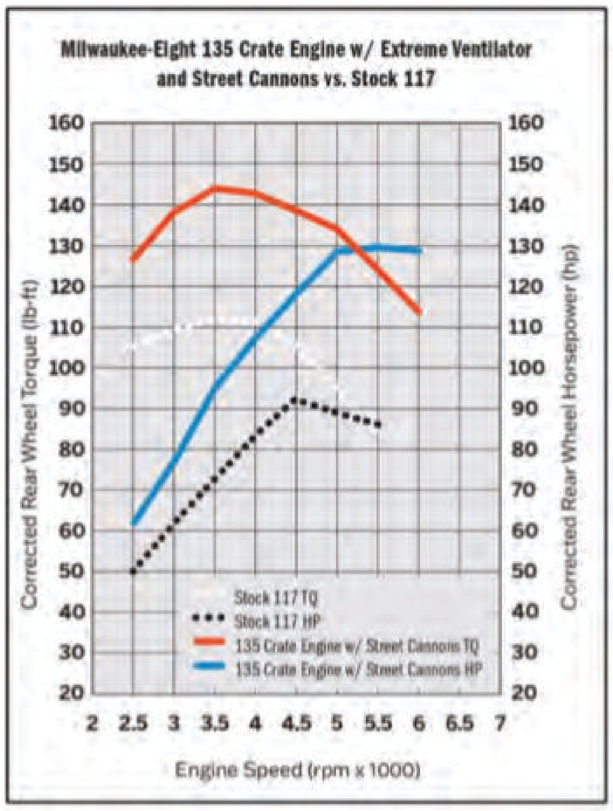
135
STAGE IV
135

Harley-Davidson's new 135 cu. in. crate engine pumps out an impressive 130 hp and 143 ft-lb of torque.

If you own a 2021 or later Harley-Davidson touring model and you have about 10-large in loose change, The Motor Company has a little (pretty big, actually) something that will boost its performance.

The Screamin' Eagle 135 Stage IV crate engine was developed using input gathered while competing in the MotoAmerica Mission King of the Baggers road racing series in the U.S., by the Screamin' Eagle factory race team. The engine is designed to bolt into any 2021 or later Harley-Davidson touring model without requiring any fabrication or relocation of the original engine mounts.

Based on the Milwaukee-Eight V-twin, it has a bore and stroke of 109.4 x 117.5 mm, for a displacement of 2,212 cc, or 135 cubic inches. Aside from its ludicrously large displacement, it also receives a number of high-performance modifications. It comes with a massive 68-mm throttle body, a CNC-machined intake manifold and CNC-ported cylinder heads, a Screamin' Eagle SE8-517 high-lift cam mounted on a billet cam plate, upgraded valve springs, cam bearing and valve tappets, and high-capacity fuel injectors. High-compression forged pistons provide a 10.7:1 compression ratio. To assure proper lubrication, it is also equipped with a high-pressure billet oil pump.



The engine claims 130 horsepower and 143 ft-lb of torque at the rear wheel, or about 41 per cent more horsepower and 28 per cent more torque than the Milwaukee-Eight 117 engine. Add about 17 per cent to the rear-wheel numbers for an approximation of crankshaft output.

The engine is assembled at the Harley-Davidson Powertrain Operations plant in Menomonee Falls, Wis. You can get it with either black or chrome trim and covers, and it's available in either air/oil cooled or Twin-cooled variations, for $10,440, not including installation. There are a few other model-specific items that need to be purchased for installation, and the ECU will need to be recalibrated. Despite the list of high-performance parts, when using the appropriate intake and exhaust systems the Screamin' Eagle 135 Stage IV is 49-state and Canada emissions compliant, and it comes with a two-year warranty.

New Exhibit at the Petersen Automotive Museum

If you you're heading to Los Angeles in the next year, make sure you plan a stop at the Petersen Museum to catch Around the World on Two Wheels.

The museum's latest exhibit, Around the World on Two Wheels, opened last March in the Richard Varner Family Gallery, and it features a number of rare and significant motorcycles and race bikes, borrowed from the Barber Museum in Birmingham, Alabama. The exhibit highlights the motorcycle's development from its early years to modern times. Among the motorcycles on display are a 1919 Harley-Davidson Model 19 J, a 1986 Suzuki GSX-R750 Limited Edition, and a 1993 Honda CBR900RR.

The Petersen Automotive Museum is located at 6060 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles. The exhibit runs through to March 2, 2024; general admission tickets can be purchased online at petersen.org at a cost of $19.95 USD for adults, $10.95 for children, and they allow access to other museum exhibits.

> "THE EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS THE MOTORCYCLE'S DEVELOPMENT FROM ITS EARLY YEARS TO MODERN TIMES"

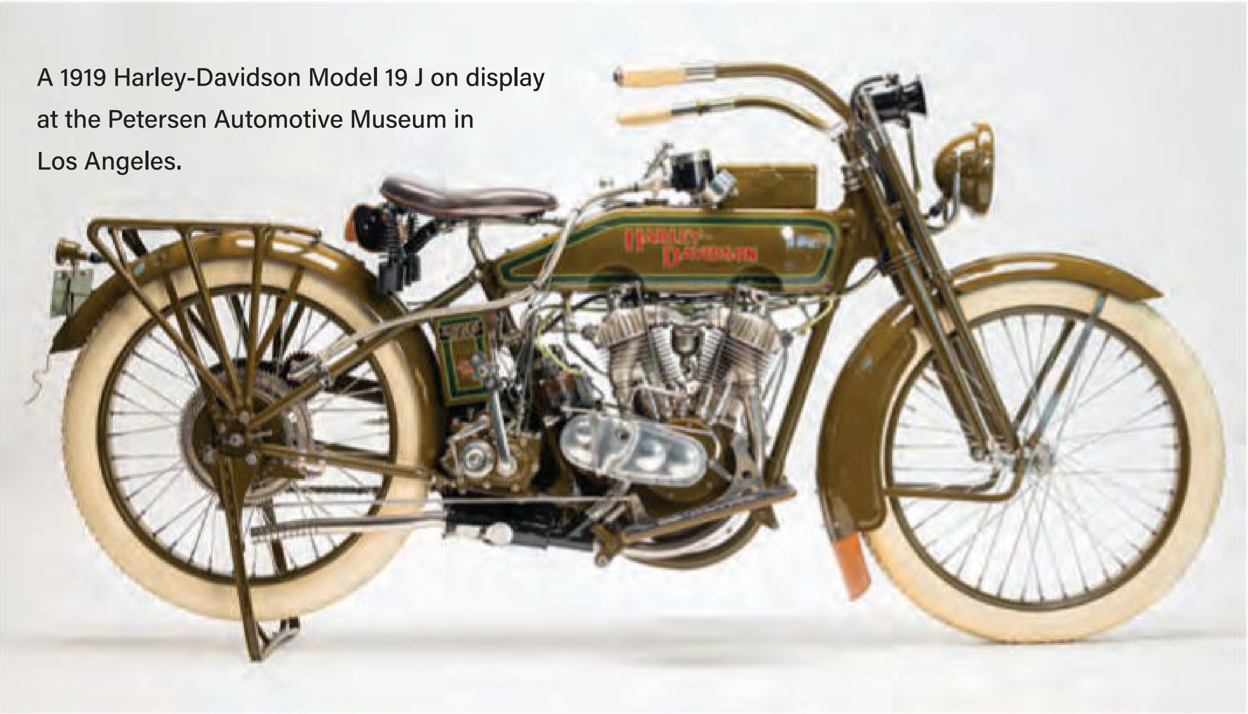
SAVE THE DATES

It's racing season again, so if you want to catch the latest road racing action in person, make sure to note these dates in your calendar.

CSBK (csbk.ca)
May 19-21 – Shannonville Motorsport Park, Ontario
June 8-11 – Grand Bend Motorplex, Ontario
July 20-23 – Atlantic Motorsports Park, Nova Scotia
August 18-20 – Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, Ontario
September 15-17 – Shannonville Motorsport Park, Ontario

After a successful inaugural season, the Canadian Mini Superbike Championship series (supersonicschool.com) announces a second season of competition, which includes the CMSBK championship, and the FIM-sanctioned MiniGP Canada series.

FIM MiniGP
May 13-14* – Lombardy Raceway, Ontario
June 24-25 – Greg Moore Raceway, British Columbia
July 1-2 – Strathmore Motorsports Park, Alberta
July 29-30* – Lombardy Raceway, Ontario
August 5-6* – Lombardy Raceway, Ontario
Sept 15-16 – Shannonville Motorsports Park, Ontario
October 8** – Lombardy Raceway, Ontario
*Combined FIM MiniGP and Mini Superbike rounds
** Mini Superbike finale and endurance



A 1919 Harley-Davidson Model 19 J on display at the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles.

THREADS

By the Numbers

MAY IS MOTORCYCLE AWARENESS MONTH

69

The percentage by which helmets reduce the risk of head trauma in an accident.

31

The Ontario Federation of Trail Riders celebrates 31 years in 2023. Over the years, the OFTR has been stewards to over 2,500 km of trail networks.

708,700

According to the latest data, there are 708,700 motorcyclists in Canada. This research, however, was done before the boom of new riders from 2020 onward.

60

It's worthwhile to learn how to ride on gravel, as in Canada, gravel roads comprise approximately 60 per cent (626,000 km) of the public road network.

1.5

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the United States could save $1.5 billion per year in economic costs if all motorcyclists wore helmets.

92

When we look at British Columbia, an astounding 92 per cent of roads are gravel.

240,958

Out of all the provinces, Quebec takes the cake with over 240,958 motorcyclists, Ontario is close behind at 212,610.

SAY WHAT?

HEADING TO DULUTH?

Wow! What a great and wonderful surprise to see the “Long Ride, One Mission” feature story in the March 2023 issue!

I know some *Motorcycle Mojo* readers will visit us as a result of this wonderful story. We will not disappoint them.

I cannot thank you enough for choosing this story to publish. As you know, Aerostich sells consumer direct only, so this kind of exposure makes a critical difference for us.

I hope someday we’ll find ourselves together at some location so I can thank you in person.

Sincerely, Andy Goldfine,
founder/president, Aerostich via email

A SATISFYING SMILE EVERY TIME

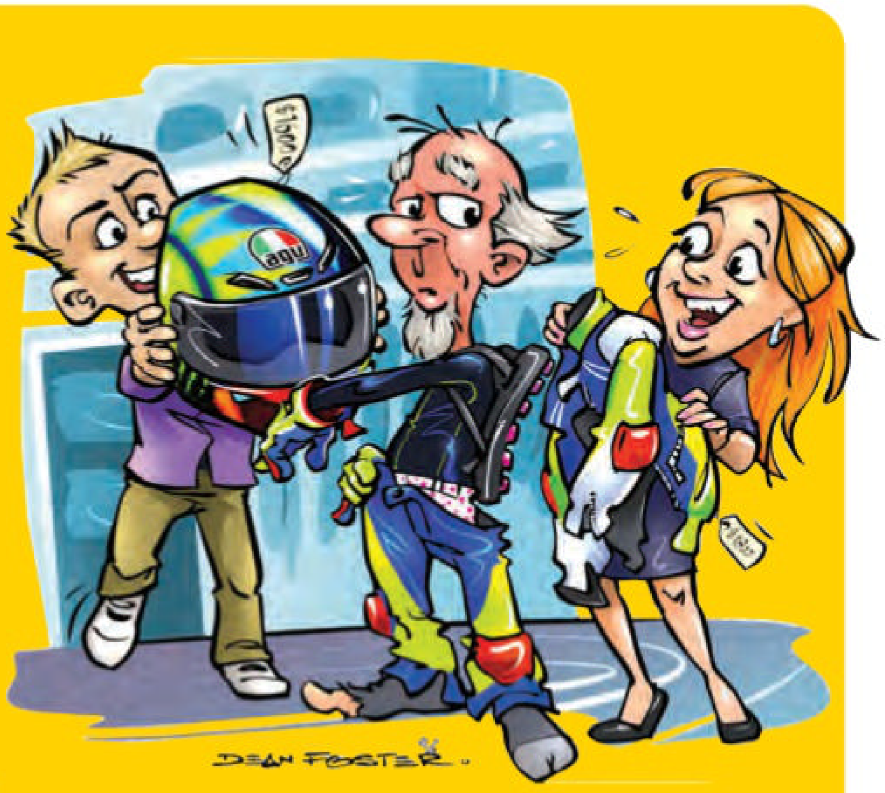
I just finished reading Clinton’s article “Looking Back” in the January/February 2023 issue. He points out: “It is very satisfying to resurrect a vintage bike and be able to still ride it.” Truer words couldn’t be spoken.

I have two bikes, which I love: a 2008 Honda Varadero is my road steed and a 2005 KTM 300 EXC is my single-track bush ride. An acquaintance of mine called me last year and asked if I wanted to look at an old bike that was wasting away in her shed.

To my joy, it was a 1974 Kawasaki G4 100 cc. I had one almost identical to it when I was a pre-teen. I bought it, brought it home and with a few parts, some time and a lot of patience, it started. It sounded and smelled exactly like I had remembered some 40-ish years ago.

This little two-stroke is the bike I grab whenever I want to ride around the family farm. Makes me smile every time!

Cheers, Rob Kerekes via email



STARTING OUT

Regarding the article by Emily Roberts, “New to the Scene” in your March 2023 issue.

Our youngest is now 23 years of age and decided to get his motorcycle licence.

Some years back, he figured he could handle our Honda VTX 1300 C, but instead I bought him a training bike; a little 125 cc Honda 4-stroke. Best investment ever.

For all our gear we shop in-store at our dealer; this way, we know it fits correctly and is comfortable.

Next, of course, the motorcycle training course and then perhaps a bike for him. But, for now, he can use one of ours.

Personally, I’m not an advocate of big horsepower and big displacement bikes for starters; 300, 400 or 650 cc in the case of a small cruiser is more than sufficient and fun.

I’m glad that he asked me if we can train some more.

What I tell him often is “Fast is easy, riding slow takes skills.” The words of my instructor many years ago.

Jorg Albry via email

The Braapy Thoughts column that Emily Roberts wrote “Looking at the Big Picture” in the December 2022 issue was so true and cool.

I am totally surprised, as she is probably my daughter’s age and she prefers paper maps as opposed to the GPS system. Do me a favour and tell her it was really neat, and that she is doing a great job!

And I still have to look into one of those Edelweiss trips as I am not getting any younger! Thanks, and I might have to bug you again with a question or two about it!

Dennis Swarts via email

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY? We love hearing your thoughts on an article, comments, suggestions or criticisms. Comments selected for publication may be edited for grammar, readability and length. Send notes to editor@motorcyclemojo.com.

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

BY **MISTI HURST**

MOTORCYCLES AS ART

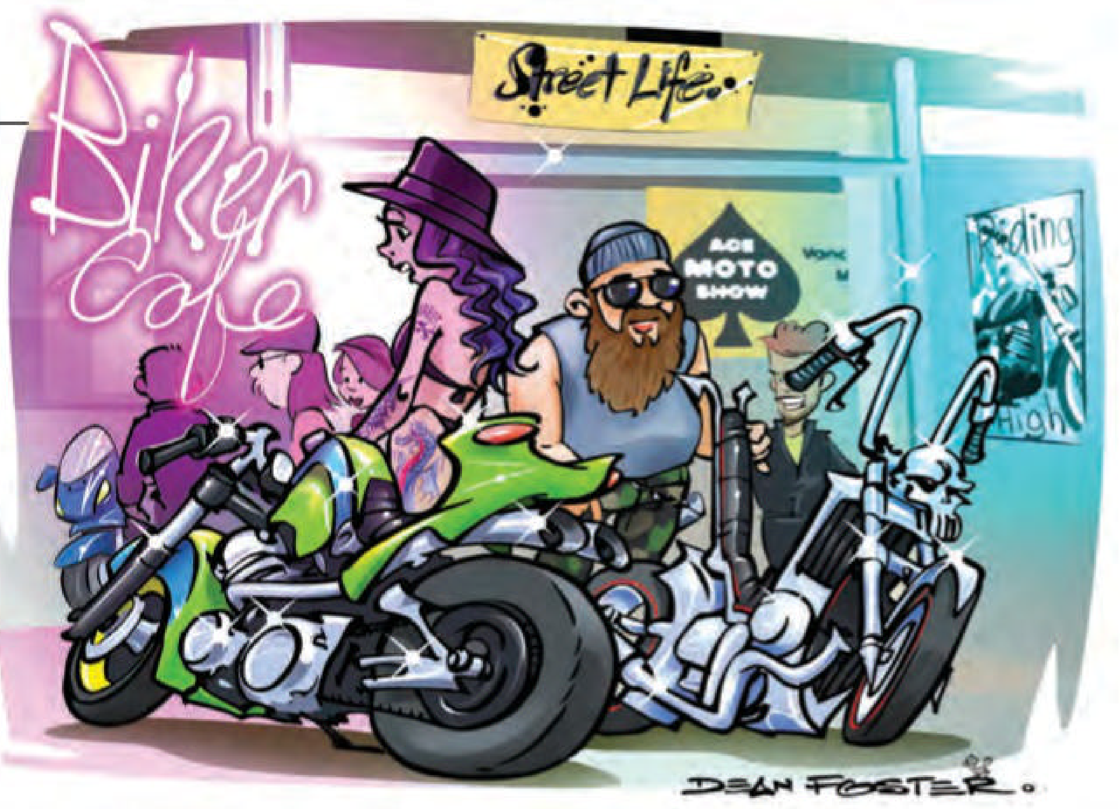


ILLUSTRATION: DEAN FOSTER

I've always seen motorcycles as beautiful. I love the angular lines, and the moody ways that pieces fit together, and the way that colours are matched. Moto design imitates the characteristics of how the bike functions. A sporty race bike looks super-fast, with a sleek body that conveys aggression and speed, and colour schemes that back it up. A café racer looks the part, with a stylish, preppy shine, and a more functional, relaxed disposition. I've always loved how sunlight ignites the pearlescence in certain paint, adding shine and shimmer, or how it bounces off chrome.

But here's the thing: I've only appreciated the design of motorcycles as it relates to their function. It's like I could never just see the motorcycle without thinking about how it feels to ride. Each style of bike presents a different feeling while being ridden. The busy, airborne, sliding style of snappy two-strokes is vastly different from the laid-back cruising rumble of a Harley.

It's mostly because the motorcycle shows I've attended — all of them, really — are based on the concept that the functionality of the bike is at the forefront. While there are bikes at traditional shows that are custom-built primarily to be looked at, most of the bikes are designed to be ridden. Same goes for the vendors and accessories; they are there to display and sell riding gear — helmets, leathers, gloves and boots — rather than moto-culture or casual wear. While I appreciated motorcycles as beautiful design pieces, I could never see them as art.

That is until my friend Alex invited me to the inaugural Ace Moto Show. Co-founded by local restaurateur David Duprey of Burnout Cafe, the Ace Moto Show took place in late January, in Gastown, Vancouver, and was marketed as Vancouver's largest motorcycle show. It was more of an art show with motorcycles than a traditional motorcycle show.

Imagine, if you will, stepping back in time into a vast, industrial, open room with wooden floors, red brick walls, and towering wooden beams. Around you are various custom-built, collectable, and race motorcycles, displayed on simple wooden crates. Pieces of original artwork hang in the background, mainly moto themed, but some not. On the upper level are wrought-iron pieces, photographs, oil and acrylic paintings, neon and gold decor, skulls, and a wall of hand-painted helmets. Downstairs, on the main floor, there's more cool art, with clever lighting showcasing the various incredible machines.

The vibe of this moto show was different. I mingled with people dressed partly like riders, partly like art curators. Many held bright pink drinks with neon-green umbrellas, or Canadian beer. Art, beauty and design were at the forefront, with very little focus on the practicality of the machines on display. The motorcycles were there to be looked at and appreciated as art, which was easy to do due to the lighting, accentuating lines and angles, colours, and shine. The layout was more like a museum or art gallery than the typical, industrial, fluorescent-lit showroom of traditional motorcycle shows — and it was refreshing.

I met David at the show, and noticing that he was holding a camera, I asked him what he did. "I work for *Motorcycle Mojo* magazine," he said. "How about you?" I paused for a moment, almost as if I could hear the gears in my head turning and processing what he had just said.

"Wait," I spat out awkwardly, "I work for Mojo. I'm Misti."

"Oh, hi," he replied. "I'm David Williams; I can't believe we've never met before because we live in the same neck of the woods." David was there to cover the show — small world.

My story is less about the Ace Motorcycle Show and the specific bikes or people associated with it, and more about the cultural scene and mental shift it introduced me to. Being that I'm more into track, dirt riding and racing, and less into the chopper/custom culture, I first felt like I might not fit into this moto scene. But within just a few minutes I was talking to other moto enthusiasts who didn't care what kind of bike I rode or why I was there. We were all there to appreciate the culture of motorcycles as art, and the art of loving motorcycles.

Heading downstairs to the lowest floor, which was more like a secret underground tunnel with crumbling bricks, exposed pipes, low ceilings and crazy stairs, I perused the vendors and checked out the vintage clothing and biker fashion from local companies like Dixxon Flannel, The Vanishing Ones, and Della Crew. There was so much to take in, and it was different from what I'm used to.

Meant for bike builders, artists and motorcycle enthusiasts, the Ace Moto Show was certainly what it claimed to be: A celebration of the custom bike culture, featuring unique artists, outfitters and vendors, and more than 70 custom bikes. **MM**

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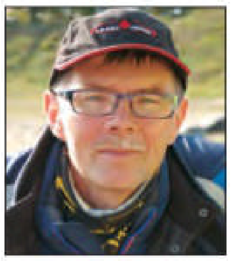
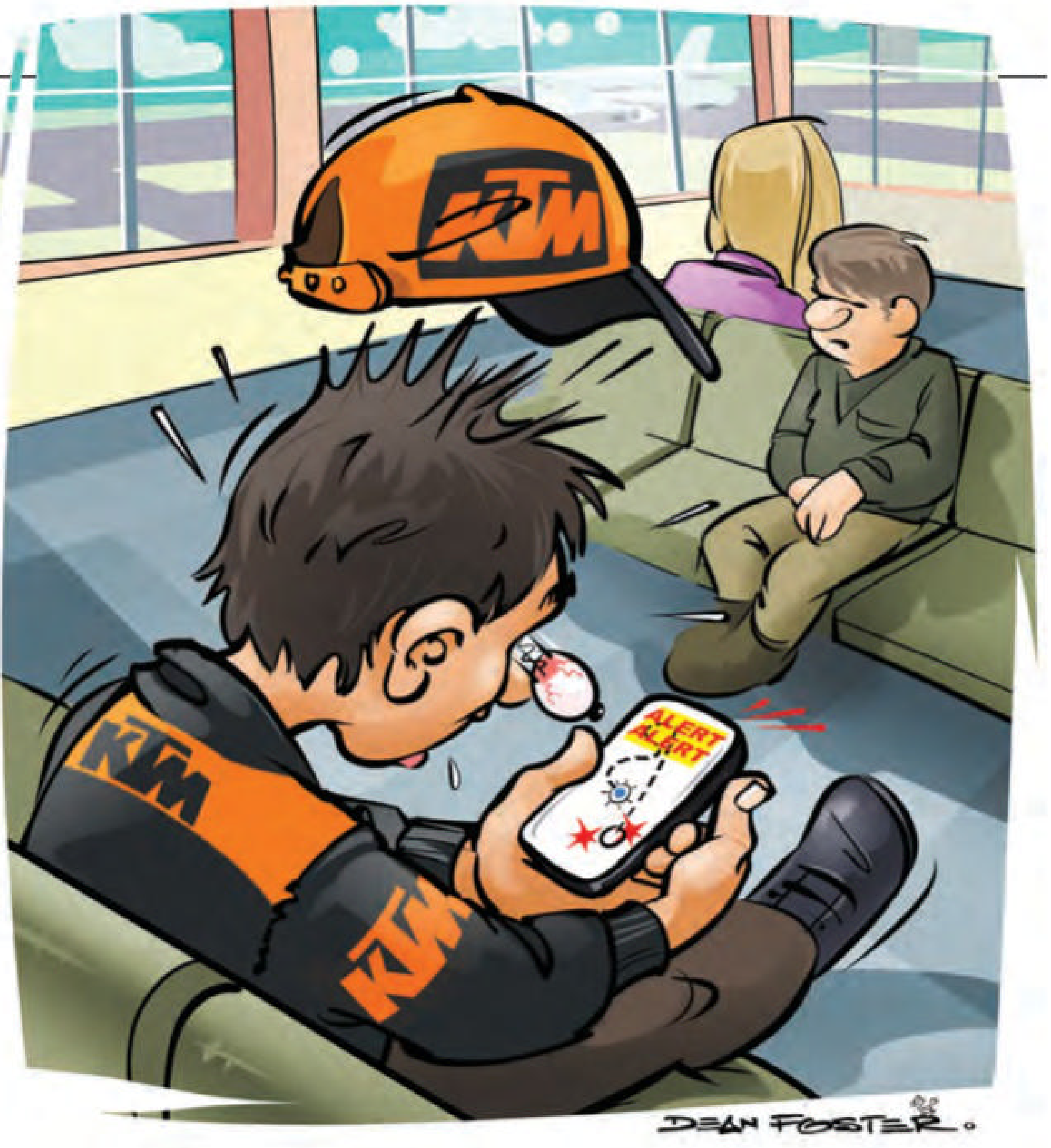


LIFE'S AN ADVENTURE

BY **CLINTON SMOUT**



JUST STOP AND THINK ABOUT IT

In readiness for a tour of Yukon and Alaska, Clint MacBride and I had arrived a day early to unload all of the adventure bikes from the truck that had transported them from Ontario. While unloading a KTM 1090, I noticed that the rear tire was flat. The tires on the bike looked brand new. I have done a lot of tire repairs over the years, so I knew the first step was to fill the tire with air. We carry a small generator and air compressor with us in a sweep pickup truck, and I soon had it aired up to 35 psi. There wasn't an audible air leak, so I used an old trick to check it. Choosing a grassy spot, I put my jacket on the ground to ensure I didn't scratch the bike, and laid it over so that I could pour water where the tire bead meets the rim. There were no bubbles on the right side, so I carefully picked up the bike and laid it down on the left and repeated the water test. It, too, revealed that there was no air leak, so I tried another trick.

Sometimes a tire doesn't seat perfectly when installed, and a ride helps. Having never before ridden a KTM 1090, I was enjoying a short jaunt up the Alaska Highway, when I noticed what looked like ATV trails beside the road. My return trip was much more fun. The suspension was amazing, but my smile only faded upon return, when I could see that the tire was half-flat. I pulled the back wheel off and removed the tire. It looked perfect. There were no installation rips or nicks, and both sidewalls were as they should be: like new. It was a tubeless tire on a tubeless spoked rim.

I put the tire back on the rim and inflated it. Sadly, after 20 minutes the tire had lost 10 psi. Frustrated at not being able to fix it, we drove to a truck shop and asked to drop the wheel into their tire water tank. Immediately I could see tiny bubbles coming out from around a few of the spokes.

I have tubeless spoked wheels on my BMW GS. Those wheels have the spokes at the edge of the rim, which is what allows them to run tubeless tires. Unlike those wheels, KTM's tubeless wheels have the spokes in the centre like a conventional spoked wheel, but the centre of the rim is sealed with a special compound. The compound sealing the spokes had a tiny tear in it, causing the wheel to leak. With no KTM dealer in Yukon, the only solution was to install a tube.

I was just putting the wheel back onto the bike when one of the tour participants arrived after having just landed. He approached me. He was upset. Turns out that James was sitting in the Vancouver airport awaiting his connection to Yukon when his alarm app went off on his phone. The app warned him that his bike was on the move. It then showed that his bike had been dropped, picked up, and dropped on the other side.

Worse yet, he freaked out even more when his phone showed his bike being ridden in a straight line north for 6.4 km, before turning off road and wiggling back. Someone was crashing and riding his almost new bike! That someone had some explaining to do. It all made sense after I explained the flat tire, my repair attempts and how I finally solved the problem by installing a tube. That's why I carry tubes with me even if my bike has tubeless wheels.

On the same trip, another rider, Keith, got a flat from a ripped rear tire. I caught up to him stranded on the side of the Dempster Highway. I thought it would be an easy fix, since Keith said he had already bought a new tire, which was following in the sweep truck. When the truck arrived, Keith handed me the new rear tire and I prepped it for installation. To ease installation, I used tire-mounting lube on the bead. The problem arose when I just couldn't get the tire to fit onto the rim.

After five minutes of struggling with it I heard my mother's voice in my head: If you have a problem you can't seem to fix, stop and just think about it. The rest of her problem-solving always involved having a cup of tea, which I didn't have, but the pausing to think worked. I thought that maybe the new tire was of the wrong size. After checking, I learned that when installing new tires, it might save time and skinned knuckles if you *first* check to see that they are the correct size. **MM**

ILLUSTRATION: DEAN FOSTER

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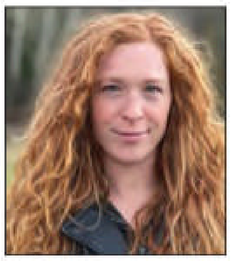
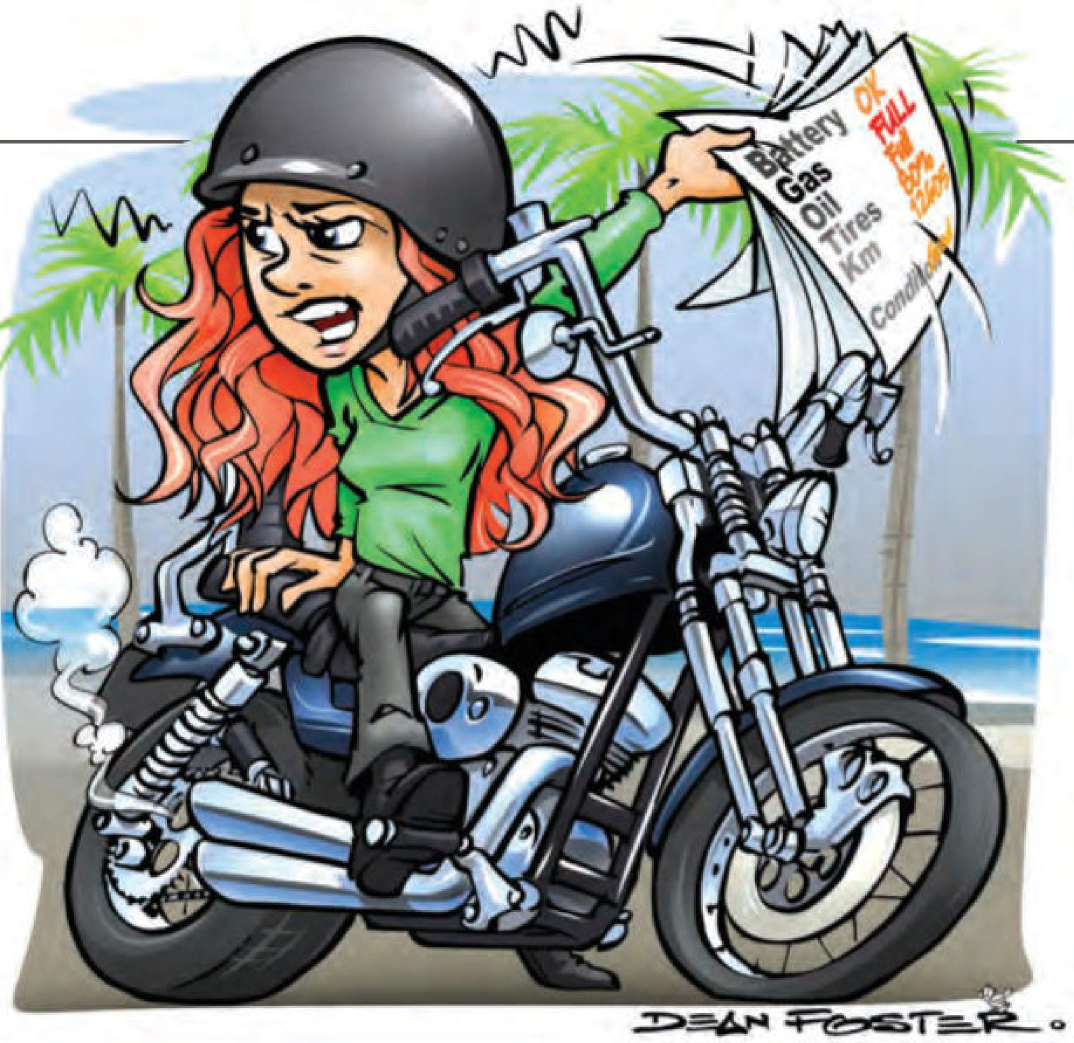


BRAAPY THOUGHTS

BY **EMILY ROBERTS**

MOTORCYCLE SHARING



In February of this year I spent a couple weeks in Florida and decided to rent a motorcycle for a few days to tour along the east coast. A Harley-Davidson just seemed fitting. I hopped online and started looking for rentals. At first, I looked at shops in the Orlando area, but soon found several websites that offered rentals for privately owned bikes, similar to Airbnb for motorcycles. There was EagleShare (part of EagleRider), Riders Share, Twisted Road and others.

I searched the websites and soon found a Harley-Davidson Sportster Custom that I thought would make a good bike for a short trip through Florida. It was close to my location, making it easy to pick up. I first booked through EagleShare but was denied by the company because of my Canadian insurance policy; I either didn't show enough proof of my policy, or they didn't accept my Canadian insurance.

I then went to Riders Share and booked the same Sportster Custom on its website. Overall, the process seemed simple. I arrived at the renter's house, and we proceeded to go over the bike, taking photos of the condition of the rental. One thing became apparent: you never know the amount of maintenance an owner puts into their bike before renting it to others.

When I checked over the bike with the owner, we noticed multiple scrapes and scratches on it; although aesthetic, it was still slightly off-putting. The running bike had been turned off for five minutes while completing paperwork before I went to ride away and heard the ominous "trrrt" as I hit the ignition button. The bike's battery was dead. The owner immediately stated that if I wanted to walk away, he'd give me a full refund and that this had never happened before. I boosted the battery before I left and luckily didn't have an issue after.

He mentioned that the rear brake squeals quite a bit and he's not sure why, asking me to only use the front brake while riding. It was likely that someone rode with their foot on the rear brake since, looking at the brake pads, they had been worn down significantly.

Although the check-in process for the website is comprehensive in specifying issues with the bike, allowing the bike's owner to upload photos and reminding them to check the tire wear, chain and oil levels, etc., it perhaps doesn't offer a good standard for maintenance. The website asks to list how much fuel was in the tank. He said it was full, and without a gas gauge on the machine, I took his word for it. However, a mere 60 miles away the gas light came on leaving me surprised and mildly disappointed.

This concept of community sharing with personal motorcycles isn't a new one — we've often lent out our bikes to friends, or taught skills to our loved ones with our bikes in hopes of encouraging some new blood in the sport. But when it comes to a profitable business idea, the concept becomes a double-edged sword.

On the plus side, you can try out all sorts of bikes, you don't have to maintain them, and you don't have to incur the original large sum investment price that comes with ownership. Not to mention, it's great when you travel somewhere new without a bike and you can easily pick another one up.

If you're a renter, when you're not riding your bike, you could earn some money and meet other riders through community sharing. It's good in theory, however, while renting the bike it became clear that there may be more downsides than upsides to the personal rental bike market.

You have no certainty that the rental bike is in good working condition, as there is no guarantee of maintenance and thorough check-overs after every rental. Many of these websites also put a limit on how many miles you can ride in a day, leaving you with hefty charges if you go over.

For rentees, meanwhile, you're lending your beloved beast to a stranger, and you can't gauge their skill level until you watch them ride away on your bike. While any rental company runs into the same predicament, they are much better equipped to deal with damage on their machines and general wear and tear from renters.

If this business model was to come to Canada, I would have a hard time putting my bike on the rental market — I just love it too much. I would consider renting again and would suggest others try it with caution, and some general knowledge of what to look for when determining if the bike you're riding is in good order. In the end, however, the feeling of riding down an open road that you haven't yet experienced is always worthwhile. **MM**

ILLUSTRATION: DEAN FOSTER

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RACE BRED STREETFIGHTER

An improved motorcycle with lessons learned from Moto2

STORY BY **COSTA MOUZOURIS**
PHOTOS BY **KINGDOM CREATIVE**

When Triumph signed a deal with Dorna in 2019 to be the exclusive engine supplier to Moto2, it wasn't only so the British bike maker could get international exposure. It was also to speed up further development of the 765-cc inline triple, which was introduced in 2017 in the Street Triple 765. The engine has its roots in the 2006 Daytona 675, a machine that had redefined the then-popular middleweight supersport class, which was populated exclusively by Japanese 600-cc inline fours.

While those 600s dominated supersport race grids around the globe, the Triumph was excluded from the popular race class due to its larger displacement. In a twist of irony, 600s have all but disappeared from competition today, while Triumph is now showcased on the international motorsports stage. The 765 Moto2 engine had received a few modifications for use in Moto2, and those modifications have made it onto the new Triumph Street Triple R and RS.

We're in Jerez, Spain, to ride the new Street Triple R and RS on the road, and the RS exclusively on the racetrack. Triumph has redesigned both models for the 2024 model year (they will likely be in dealerships by the time you read this) with new styling and

0
MPH
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Indicators
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Service

Triumph's Street Triple 765 RS is more track-focused than the R, but either one provides a ton of fun on the street.

Motorcycle Mojo
STREET TRIPLE

revised electronics — and a lot of the lessons learned on the racetrack have now made it into the street engine.

Race-bred mods that are now part of the street engine include high-flowing intake ports, higher-compression pistons with machined crowns that provide a more precise combustion-chamber shape, higher-lift cams, strengthened connecting rods and wrist pins, and closer gearbox ratios. The airbox intake snorkels have been shortened and the exhaust now has one freer-flowing catalytic converter instead of two.

The inline triple is now more powerful in both models; the R claims 118 horsepower, up 2 hp, while the RS claims 128 hp making it the most powerful Street Triple to date. For reference, the Moto2 race engine is tuned to produce 138 hp. Both street engines' torque peaks at 59 ft-lb, and the torque curve is broad and flat.

Street Ride on the R

We began with a 140-kilometre ride on the Street Triple R along moderately winding, occasionally bumpy roads, which were quite similar to what can be found in most of Canada. And just like in Canada, the morning temperature was at 1 C, prompting me to switch the optional heated grips ($374) to high. The riding position is upright with a slight bend to the tapered handlebar, though the footpegs are a bit high for my six-foot frame. The seat, at 826 mm tall, provides a modest reach to the ground.

The suspension is fully adjustable at both ends on both models, though the RS has a higher-spec Showa fork and an Ohlins STX40 shock (Showa on the R). Our hosts had set my R up for comfort, and it was compliant and comfy even over bigger bumps, though it wallowed around a bit in the rear at an elevated pace. I later dialled in some rear rebound damping, which eliminated the wallowing, while still providing a comfortable ride. The seat is firm and supportive, and was comfy enough all day, though we made several stops along the way, so I never really experienced uninterrupted seat time.

The R has Sport, Road, Rain, and Rider (configurable) modes (the RS adds Track mode), with Road providing an appropriately soft throttle response for getting out of the city. Modes are selected via a dedicated button on the left-hand switch assembly, though you still have to confirm your selection through another button. Later switching to Sport mode sharpened throttle response, while remaining easily manageable, so I left it in this mode for the remainder of the ride.

Bi-directional Shifter

Throttle response and traction control are turned down respectively in each mode, though even in their most intrusive mode, they remain unobtrusive. The bike pulls smoothly and delivers power in a linear manner, never running out of steam all the way to redline. While the RS already came with a bi-directional quick shifter as standard, it is now also standard on the R. It's a complex system that measures a number of factors, including shifter pressure and how quickly it is being operated, speed, engine rpm, throttle position and how quickly it is being applied, and gear position. It works flawlessly, providing clean, light, clutchless gear changes, whether riding casually on the road or flogging the bike on the track.

Upgrades to the RS include a 10-hp increase in output, the aforementioned higher-spec suspension, Brembo Stylema monobloc front calipers (M4.32 units on the R), and a Brembo radial master cylinder, as opposed the R's conventional Nissin master. The RS also has cruise control, and the instrument panel is different: the RS has a 5-inch configurable TFT screen; the R has smaller TFT screen with a fixed display for the tachometer and speedometer, and a separate display for ride menus and other info flanked by vertical arrays of warning lights. Despite the higher-tech larger display on the RS, I preferred the simpler instrument panel on the R.

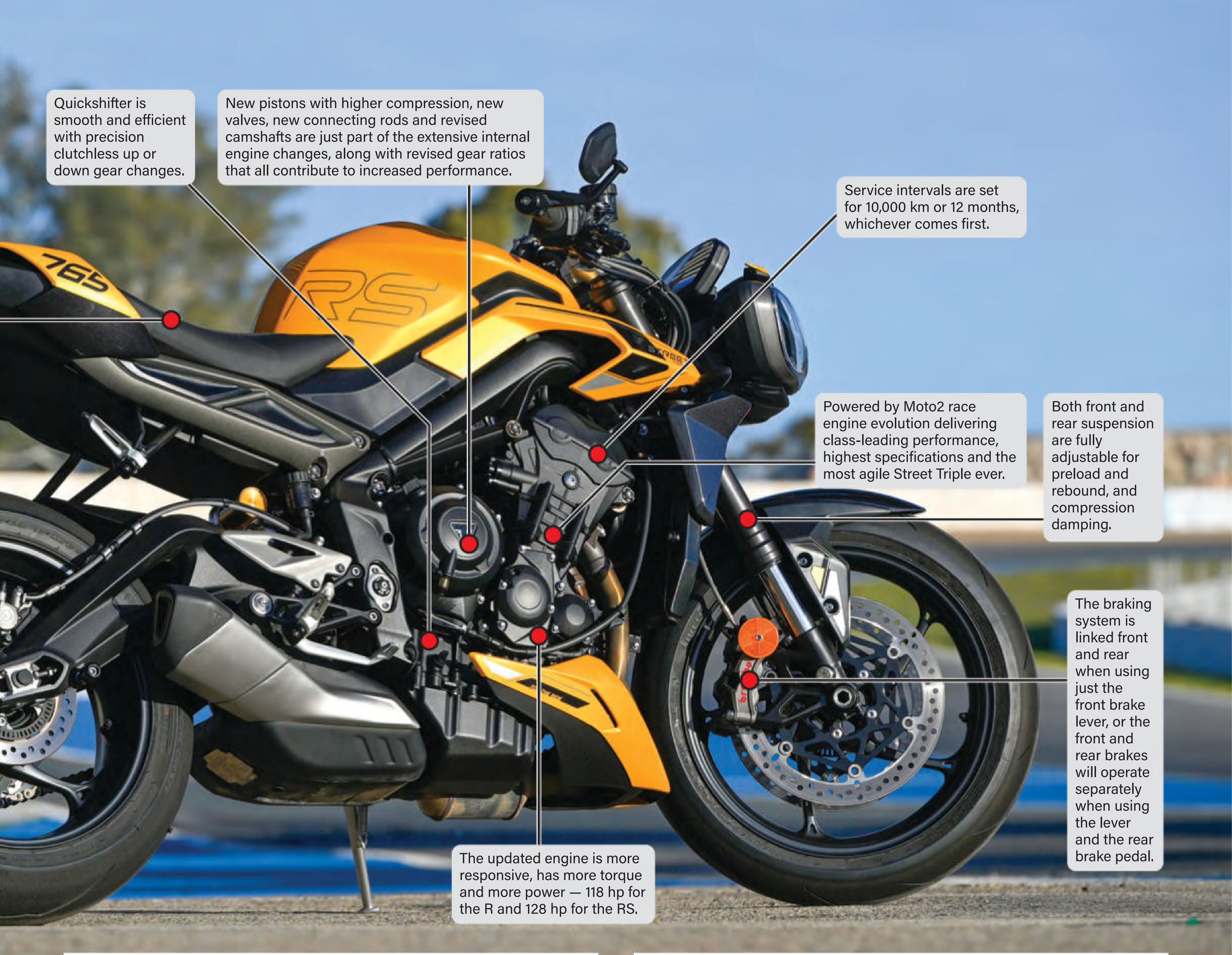
Seat of the R model is 826 mm from terra firma (836 mm of the RS). A lower seat is available, which will decrease the seat height by 28 mm.

Corner optimized traction control and ABS.

The RS also has two adjustable-reach levers, as well as an adjustable front master-cylinder ratio, while the R only has an adjustable-reach brake lever.

On the Track with the RS

Switching to the RS in the afternoon revealed that, although it is mostly similar to the R, it feels like a different machine. The first thing that's noticeable when seated is its taller seat. Specs show it sits 10 mm taller than the R, but it feels taller than that because, while the spring rates are the same on both models, preload is cranked higher at the factory for more aggressive steering geometry — the



Quickshifter is smooth and efficient with precision clutchless up or down gear changes.

New pistons with higher compression, new valves, new connecting rods and revised camshafts are just part of the extensive internal engine changes, along with revised gear ratios that all contribute to increased performance.

Service intervals are set for 10,000 km or 12 months, whichever comes first.

Powered by Moto2 race engine evolution delivering class-leading performance, highest specifications and the most agile Street Triple ever.

Both front and rear suspension are fully adjustable for preload and rebound, and compression damping.

The braking system is linked front and rear when using just the front brake lever, or the front and rear brakes will operate separately when using the lever and the rear brake pedal.

The updated engine is more responsive, has more torque and more power — 118 hp for the R and 128 hp for the RS.

frames on both machines are identical. The RS's handling felt more responsive and it steered sharper than the R, though the tradeoff was a firmer ride.

The next day we headed to Circuito de Jerez to ride the RS — hard! Riding on a track might be more conducive on a dedicated supersport machine, but to me, lapping on a competent naked bike is more fun — and the RS is fun!

Throttle response is sharp yet easy to manage in Track mode, and the engine's flat powerband makes it pull deceptively hard, coming up quickly to the rev limiter. Throttle modulation is easily manageable even in Track mode, and the engine is accompanied by the unmistakable inline-triple exhaust drone that's so sweet on the ears. The OEM tires also provided peg-scraping grip, although if I had had more time on the track, I'd have cranked up the front and rear preload to raise the bike and keep the peg feelers from throwing sparks.

Adjustment for the Track

I ground the foot pegs regularly in my first session with the initial suspension adjustment, and had it readjusted before going out again. Three turns were added to the preload adjusting rings to provide more cornering clearance, and the damping settings were also

bumped up from a sporty setting to a more appropriate track setting. This not only reduced the peg scraping to almost nil, but it also sharpened steering and made the handling more responsive overall.

Rowing through the gearbox on the track, the changes within were really noticeable. First gear is a bit taller than before, but the rest of the gears are shorter. This made selecting the right gear for the right corner effortless at Jerez, which has a variety of turns from long high-speed sweepers to a second-gear hairpin. The bike's OEM Pirelli Supercorsa SP V3 also provided excellent grip and feedback. The R comes standard with less grippy but likely longer-lasting Continental ContiRoad tires.

One area that has been improved is ABS performance while in Track mode on the RS. The previous Street Triple RS I had ridden in 2020 handled exceptionally well on a racetrack, but fell short when braking hard. The ABS would trigger occasionally in Track mode, causing it to run wide at corner entry. The new RS braked flawlessly in Track mode, with excellent feedback and feel at the lever, eye-popping power, and not once triggering the ABS on the track.

If used alone, the Street Triple's brake lever actuates the front and rear brakes in a linked fashion, but if you apply both brakes, the lever and pedal work independently. I altered between using only the front brake and both brakes, and can't fault either method.

An Accomplished Track Machine

It turned out to be an almost perfect marriage of track and machine, as the well-balanced RS railed around the circuit with poise, demanding little physical and mental effort to keep it at its limit. I felt as fresh at the end of the third 20-minute session as I did on the first lap of the first session. That's a pretty good indication that a motorcycle is well sorted.

The Triumph Street Triple 765 models had a lot going for them last year, and they're even better now. Which one is for you depends on how much you yearn for track time. The Street Triple R starts at $11,895, and offers most of what the higher-spec RS offers, but is less track-focused. The Street Triple RS starts at $14,295, and has most of the racy bits you need during weekends at the track right out of the box. I think that if you only plan on participating occasionally in track days, even the R would do exceptionally well with appropriate tires, saving you a few bucks for the entry fees.

There's also an exclusive Street Triple 765 Moto2 Edition based on the RS, with clip-ons replacing the tubular handlebar, an Ohlins fork, carbon fibre bodywork, and special paint available for $17,995. Last year Triumph extended the Dorna deal until the end of the 2024 Moto2 season. Expect the further improvements made to those racing engines in that time to make onto future Street Triple 765s. **MM**

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF 2024 TRIUMPH STREET TRIPLE 765 **VISIT: MOTORCYCLEMOJO.COM**

MANUFACTURER'S SPECS

LIST PRICE
$11,895 – R
$14,295 – RS

WARRANTY
24 months, unlimited mileage

CONTACT
triumph-motorcycles.ca

ENGINE TYPE
Liquid-cooled inline triple

DISPLACEMENT
765 cc

POWER
120 hp (88.3 kW) at 11,500 rpm – R
128 hp (95.6 kW) at 12,000 rpm – RS

TORQUE
59 ft-lb (80 Nm) at 9,500 rpm

BORE AND STROKE
78 x 53.4 mm

COMPRESSION RATIO
13.35:1

FUEL DELIVERY
EFI with ride-by-wire throttle

TRANSMISSION
6-speed

FINAL DRIVE TYPE
Chain

FRONT SUSPENSION
41 mm inverted fork, adjustable for compression and rebound damping, and preload

REAR SUSPENSION
Single shock, adjustable for compression and rebound damping, and preload

WHEEL TRAVEL
Front: 115 mm (4.5 in.)
Rear: 133 (5.2 in.) – R
131 mm (5.1 in.) – RS

BRAKES
Front: Two 310 mm discs with radial 4-piston calipers
Rear: 220 mm disc with single-piston caliper; ABS

WHEELBASE
1,400 mm (55.1 in.)

RAKE AND TRAIL
23.7 degree / 97.8 mm – R
23.2 degree / 96.9 mm – RS

TIRES
Front: 120/70ZR17
Rear: 180/55ZR17

WEIGHT (WET)
188 kg (414 lb)

SEAT HEIGHT
826 mm (32.5 in.) – R
836 mm (32.9 in.) – RS

FUEL CAPACITY
15 litres

FUEL ECONOMY (CLAIMED)
5.4L/100 km

FUEL RANGE (ESTIMATED)
278 km

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The LAST FRONTIER

Taking in the nature and the weather of the far Northwest

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **JEFF DAVISON**

As they trekked through the Alaskan wilderness of the late 1800s, John Burroughs, a companion of naturalist John Muir wrote, "Things are on a new scale." It was a moment of supreme understatement. Alaska could fit 19 of the lower states within its borders and its shores account for 50 per cent of the entire U.S. coastline. As residents like to point out: if you cut Alaska in half, Texas would be the third-largest state. After thousands of kilometres and one unsurpassed experience after another, I could only imagine how Alaska might continue besting itself.

Riding south out of Fairbanks on Suzi Blue, my trusty 2022 Suzuki V-Strom DL650XA, I found the highway was an uneventful corridor of trees until just north of Healy where, along the boundary of Denali National Park, I was thrust into the Alaska Mountains. Steep ravines fell away on either side, and sharp, towering peaks rose into the clouds gathering overhead. The weather was turning. Since my partner, Steph, was flying into Anchorage to join me in a few days, and since Denali was on our itinerary, I rode by the gate. I hoped the view of North America's highest peak would be better on our return.

Camping or No Camping

As temperatures and precipitation fell, my bones grew increasingly resistant to my intended camping in Talkeetna, and began lobbying for a warm, dry motel. I soon discovered, however, that there was no vacancy anywhere from here to Anchorage — more than two hours away. So camping it would be.

Talkeetna turned out to be a charming place that maintained its air as a rustic gold mining centre. Of course, it now offered gourmet coffee, gifts, and helicopter tours over nearby glaciers. I also discovered that the main street was the inspiration for the old TV

FAST FACTS

ONE ROAD IN, AND OUT

After the Japanese bombed Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands during the Second World War, the U.S. Army began looking for a spot to build a secret military site. The proposed base needed to be an ice-free port and as inaccessible as possible. Whittier fit the bill perfectly, thanks to the 1,070-metre peaks that surround it and keep it hidden in cloud cover for much of the year. To provide access to the Seward Highway to the north, the Army blasted a supply tunnel through the solid granite mountain on the west side of town. The 4 km long Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel remains one of Alaska's great engineering marvels. Construction of the tunnel led to construction of what was at the time the largest building in Alaska to house more than 1,000 workers.

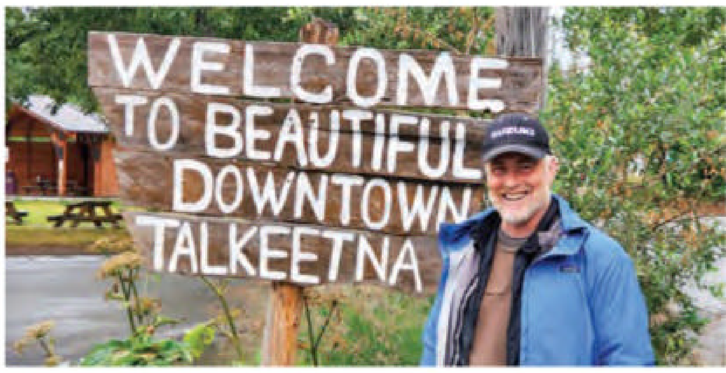
KENAI PENINSULA

Alaska's Kenai Peninsula extends 240 km southwest from the Chugach Mountains south of Anchorage. The peninsula is separated from the mainland on the west by the Cook Inlet and on the east by Prince William Sound, covers 41,435 sq km, and is 90 per cent wilderness.

KENAI FJORDS NATIONAL PARK

It seems as though the ice age is still present at the southeastern edge of the Kenai Peninsula, where nearly 40 glaciers flow from the Harding Icefield, Kenai Fjords National Park's crowning feature.

View of Kachemak Bay from the deck of the garden shed lodging. Kilcher Family Homestead. (left)
Gloomy but beautiful Byron Glacier. (below)

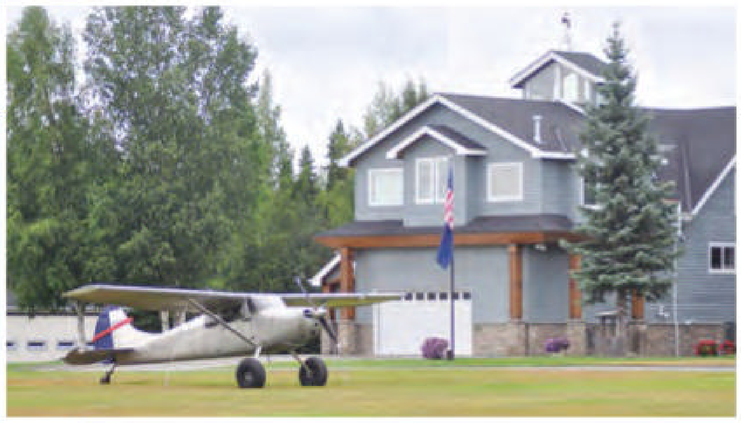


series *Northern Exposure*, so Talkeetna is what most visitors expect of Alaska.

Riding into Anchorage, on the other hand, I was struck by how much the city was like any other. In fact, locals joke that the best part of Anchorage is that in under an hour you can drive to Alaska. I searched out the House of Harley-Davidson, which offers free camping (including bathroom and shower) to riders of all makes and models.

Just Park Anywhere

As a beach-loving sun worshipper, Steph's journey to Anchorage did not top her bucket list. I was grateful and determined to make the most of our 10 days. (Little did we know the leaden clouds and cold drizzle would be our almost-daily companions.) On



Seward harbour, on Resurrection Bay, is merely an introduction to the beauty in store on the Kenai Peninsula. (left)
Each home has its own airplane hangar on Cange Street in Anchorage. (above)

the way to Flat Top Mountain for a vista of the city, we detoured onto Cange Street which doubles as a runway, and where each home has its own attached hangar — much as your house has a garage. Prop planes were parked on several front lawns. On another city corner, we encountered a moose casually browsing a willow before she sauntered across a driveway and into the backyard.

South of town, the Seward Highway hugged the narrow shore between the steep Chugach Mountains and the churning waters of Turnagain Arm. At Beluga Point, we stopped to watch the tidal bore, a daily surge of seawater that could be more than a metre high and sounded like a freight train. The tides themselves, rising to 10 metres, rivaled those of the East Coast's Bay of Fundy.

Our first destination was the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center where injured and orphaned animals were nurtured and rehabilitated. Although we would later see several species in the wild, it was one place we were guaranteed to see black bears and grizzlies, caribou and elk, bison, moose, and muskoxen up close.

My intrepid partner deserved at least one nice hotel, so ahead of time I had booked a "Glacier View" suite in Whittier, on the northeast corner of the Kenai Peninsula. To arrive at the isolated port city meant navigating North America's longest tunnel which ran four kilometres under an entire mountain. The single-lane tunnel alternately serviced both trains and automobiles and was a marvel of engineering.

A Town of Little Progress

Besides a fish processing plant, Whittier had only two large buildings, both of which were remnants of the Second World War: an abandoned military supply post, and an apartment building that housed nearly the entire town. Without being renovated in any way, the top floor now served as a hotel.

Our apartment, while clean, was clad in '60s paneling and the bathroom was adorned floor-to-ceiling in pink tile. Most bizarre was the multitude of safety bars fastened to the wall in the shower. Because Steph had started calling it the Bates Motel, I suggested the handles were for grabbing if Norman dropped by.

Not only was the rain incessant and we could barely see the harbour from our window, but when we asked about the glacier, we were told we'd have to sail 10 km out of port and around a mountain to get a glimpse. Locals joke that "Everything is sh-ttier in Whittier," and we had to concur.

Going to See it One Way or Another

If our night had been a low point (but a great story), the next morning would be a decided high. Wearing our

A grizzly is rehabilitated in Alaska Wildlife Conservation Centre. (left)
Photo ops at every turn in Northwestern Fjord, Kenai Peninsula National Park's Northwestern Glacier. (below)

SPEED LIMIT 25
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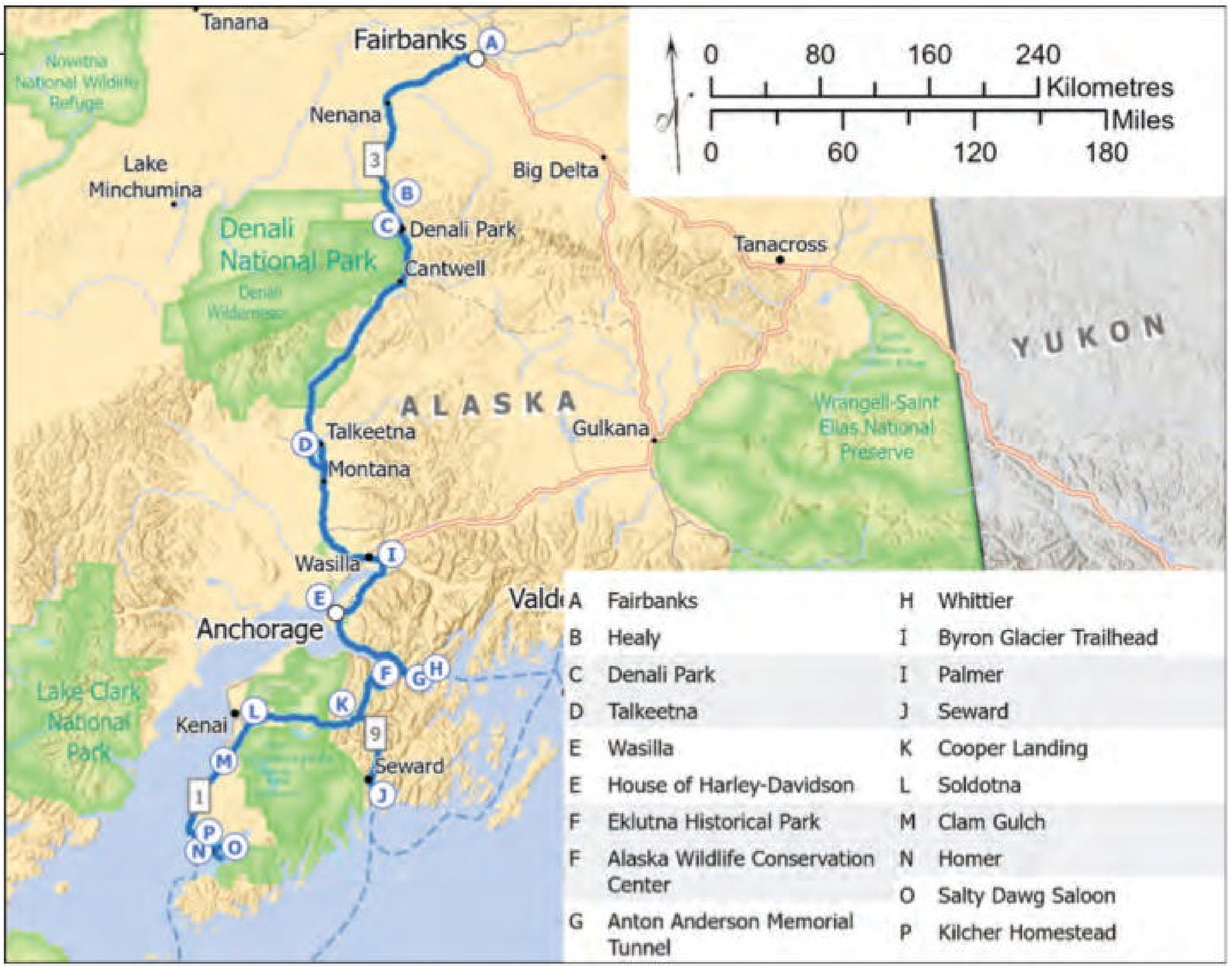
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Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge
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B Healy
C Denali Park
D Talkeetna
E Wasilla
E House of Harley-Davidson
F Eklutna Historical Park
F Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
G Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel
H Whittier
I Byron Glacier Trailhead
I Palmer
J Seward
K Cooper Landing
L Soldotna
M Clam Gulch
N Homer
O Salty Dawg Saloon
P Kilcher Homestead

rain gear and carrying a set of hiking poles, we set out to explore the Byron Glacier. The dense forest gave way to alder thickets that soon gave way to lichen-dotted boulders.

Under a steady rain, we climbed the rugged upper valley where ice lay covered in black silt. Towering above us, the jagged peaks were trimmed in what looked like white icing, while sinuous waterfalls tumbled from the sheer cliffs.

Up ahead, motionless, stood the shining blue glacier, a frozen river imperceptibly carving out the valley floor. Dwarfed in this vast, timeless amphitheatre, we seemed no more than fleeting specks, and tears welled up in Steph's eyes. Things were on a new scale.

Nature at its Finest

After a cozy night in a warm log cabin in Moose Pass, we continued to Seward where we joined a day-long boat tour of Kenai Fjords National Park and Resurrection Bay, a rich marine ecosystem with craggy coves, deep fjords, and tiny, treed islands. Every wildlife sighting brought a new gasp: Stellar sea lions, otters, puffins, murres, and mountain goats were but a prelude to the humpbacks, fin whales, and orcas. Bald eagles watched us with interest from branches along the shore.

Most stunning of all was Northwestern Glacier at the head of the fjord. Although a million tiny ice chunks bobbed around our boat like warning buoys, we drew ever closer and were overwhelmed by its size and the thunderous calving. John Muir called the sound "ice-guns," and I could not think of a better description.

A humpback dives in the waters of Northwestern Fjord within view of Anchor and Ogive Glaciers.

The splitting columns sent booming explosions reverberating off the cliffs, followed by great walls of ice crashing into the frigid water. We stood gripped in a hallowed silence.

After another snug cabin night and a long trek back to Denali National Park, we enjoyed a sled dog demonstration before following the park road to Mile 15, where we hiked along the Savage River. Farther in, mudslides had closed the road, and the rain and fog that had arrived with Steph continued to obscure the peak. We were disappointed but not surprised. Denali is shrouded in cloud 70 per cent of the time. Instead, we explored Old Denali Highway, the original road to the park, made of gravel and potholes. It was the only road we travelled that was not in good condition.

Supersized

Returning south, we passed through Palmer in the Matanuska Valley, a region with a surprising claim to fame. Particularly fertile soils and summer days with 22 hours of sunlight produce record-setting vegetables: cabbage bigger than a husky, carrots the size of footballs, and pumpkins that must be lifted by crane. As one resident told me, "We get just as much sunlight as anywhere else — we just get it all at once."

Along the Matanuska River, we

were introduced to glamping in a huge canvas tent filled with a queen-sized bed, upholstered chair, ottoman, and more pillows than a palace. It was a far cry from my standard bivy sack. And just what Steph had wanted.

Morning was a little brighter as we set off for Homer, a small town on the southwest side of the Kenai Peninsula. Twisting through wooded Cooper Landing and Soldotna, the Sterling Highway turned south and followed the coast along Cook Inlet. From Clam Gulch, we skirted the edge of the cliffs all the way to our destination.

When keeping my eyes on the road became impossible, we pulled over and hiked through a field to the precipice, where, across sparkling Kachemak Bay, we could see Sadie Peak standing in snow-covered glory high in the equally glorious Chugach Mountain Range.

Paying it Forward

The only thing I knew about Homer was that there was a saloon called the Salty Dawg perched on the end of a spit. As old as the town itself, the diminutive building had served variously as a school, post office, railway station, and grocery store.

In 1957, however, it became a saloon and, shortly thereafter, as the story goes, a patron stuck a dollar bill to the wall for his friend to buy a drink when he arrived later that night. The ensuing tradition has resulted in an establishment where every surface is completely papered in dollar bills. Unable to find room for my own bill, I wedged a Loonie (very Canadian) into a picture frame and apologized (also Canadian) to the bartender for my 76-cent contribution.

Along the bay, 30 minutes east of Homer, we bounced down a rutted dirt road that led to the Kilcher Family Homestead. In the early 1940s, professor Yule Kilcher left war-torn Switzerland in search of peace. He found it in the wilds near Fritz Creek where he and his wife, Ruth, began to homestead and raise eight children in a log cabin they built by hand. Living a subsistence lifestyle and clearing fields, the family eventually acquired 600 acres where they continue to live off the land.

You have undoubtedly heard the music of Jewel, one of the Kilcher grandchildren, and may even have seen episodes of their Discovery Channel series *Alaska: The Last Frontier*.

A Spectacular Experience

A daughter, Stellavera, lived off-grid in a yurt near the cliffs and had converted a garden shed into surprisingly enchanting accommodations. Enclosed in clear corrugated roof panels and furnished with a queen bed, heater, and lots of books, the structure gave us stellar views of the bay, the forest, and the midnight sunset.

Down a winding path, we found a pit toilet and an outdoor shower with ample hot water. They were densely surrounded on three sides by trees and provided a panorama of Kachemak Bay and the ice-glazed mountains beyond. It was spectacular.

Before we knew it, however, it was time to return to Anchorage for Suzi Blue's scheduled service, and time for Steph to return home. The weather had turned cool and wet the day she arrived, and although it never kept us from the many activities we had planned, we had begun to joke that the sun would reappear the day she left. Which is exactly what happened.

Under a clear blue sky, I rolled out my bivy again at the House of Harley-Davidson, anticipating the next leg of the journey and happy to have spent 10 days together in a land unlike anything we had ever known. Steph still loves the beach, but now all she can talk about is when we can go back to Alaska. Things are on a new scale. **MM**

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MARRAKECH EXPRESS

Part II

Experiencing the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara Desert, and wondering "have I been sold into marriage for five kilograms of salt?"

STORY BY **EMILY ROBERTS**
PHOTOS BY **EMILY ROBERTS, RICARDO SERPA, CARLOS MARTINS & CHRIS HOLLANDS**

In our March issue, Emily Roberts embarked on a journey via Aventura Motorcycle Tours from Malaga, Spain, across the Strait of Gibraltar to Tangier, Morocco. The ride took her down the Atlantic Coast to Essaouira where she turned inland to Marrakech and the Atlas Mountains. While in Marrakech, Emily was forced to endure a Henna tattoo at a local market, and pay for it. She left Marrakech underwhelmed, with only a stomach bug and a temporary tattoo to remember the place by.

FAST FACTS

THE PASHA

The Pasha is a high ranking political or military figure, quite often a King or governor, who often lives in or visits the kasbahs (an ancient, fortified quarter of a town or city) throughout the land they rule or govern over. Inside the kasbah is the medina, an area generally comprised of tight living quarters and unique shopping areas.

A RICH HISTORY

Morocco holds ancient history in it's soil, with the region being inhabited since the Paleolithic era over 300,000 years ago. For more than 1,200 years, Morocco has seen no less than six distinct dynasties take control of the country, making for a very rich multicultural society.

Traditional Berber-style houses are made of mud brick. Although mud brick is not as common for building today in Morocco; it's still impressive to see these buildings together in large numbers.

Something's Rotten in Marrakech

One thing to keep in mind while riding in countries like Morocco is the smells are unlike anything else: mostly good, but some very bad. As we left the city I caught wind of heavy sewage, burning garbage and something rotting; this along with my newly acquired stomach bug, had me questioning how quickly I could stop the bike and get my helmet off should the need arise.

Sitting at 2,260 metres in altitude, the Tizi n'Tichka Pass is the highest mountain pass in all of North Africa. The summit offered a spectacular view of mountains covered in tan and muted blues and greens.

As we descended at each corner of the road, as if to watch for bad drivers, was a dog basking in the sun; there were at least 50 of them in the small stretch of road as we rode down from the summit.

A Salty Bride Price

We followed the road to Teoulet, and the previous Pasha's kasbah. What looked to be a ruin and ready to crumble revealed to have an immaculate interior, with beautiful tilework and an incredibly detailed plastered ceiling. "One kilo of salt for her hand in marriage," the kasbah guide said to Ricardo, I quickly piped up and said, "I'm worth at least five!" We all laughed as the local then agreed that five kilos would be acceptable. My laugh then turned to a nervous giggle, wondering if he was serious.

We began moving away from the Atlas Mountains toward the Merzouga Desert. There was a grand shift in views and along with it, culture. We left the tight and busy roads lined with

One motorcycle trip created a group of life-long friends. From L to R: Dorian, Viorel, Ricardo, Emily and Chris. Behind the lens is Carlos.

stray dogs and clay houses and traded it for more rural areas with small markets, and people selling knitted goods for the coming winter.

The roads seemed to get stretched by both ends; what once was nothing but twisted and kinked soon became straighter and flatter. In Alnif we stopped at a place called Café Saghro, owned by a lovely local named Mohamed, a geologist and a guide for many international geological treks. He explained the history and significance of the area and showed us some fossils of the first multi-celled organisms that crawled earth.

Into the Desert

As we approached the town of Merzouga and saw nothing but dry and arid desert. In the distance, a mother with her young baby and husband walking away from the road disappeared into nothingness. Just outside of Merzouga we turned off to park our bikes and traded them for dromedaries. We rode through the desert on the beautiful animals to our off-the-grid tent camp called Sahara Sky Luxury Camp.

Our guide said they don't name their camels so I called mine Jeremy; he was a young camel and "learning the ropes" of carrying people. As we travelled into the iconic Sahara Desert, I continuously praised Jeremy and gave him ear scratches; I think he appreciated the attention.

From the top of a dune, we watched the sun sink into the horizon, and I realized that I may never see something like this again — and how lucky the six of us were to experience this together in that moment. It's something that happens every day, of course, but each sunset brings one less sunrise. Each time we witness the awesomeness of the planet's orbit around that great fiery star, means that another day is taken from us and that the day shouldn't be taken for granted.

Darkness conquered and we settled into our camp; the workers played us traditional Berber music as we settled in for the night. I awoke early and watched the sun rise out of the mountains of neighbouring Algeria off in the distance.

Distant Illusion

We found a few donated snowboards; Dorian and I grabbed them to ride down the dune we were going to hike. The desert looked small in comparison as we approached the dune which we thought would only take 15 minutes to reach; an hour later, we were just at the base. Another hour later, we had reached the top.

We were unsure of how well the boards would work since a proper

A constant mix of vibrant colours is visible throughout the mountains of Morocco, it becomes tough to focus on the road when the scenery is so magnificent.

sandboard has a different base type and bindings. We began riding down the large dune and quickly realized that these boards were less than ideal as it became an out-of-control slow race. I dove off the board, finding myself with sand in every crevice. We returned to camp and emptied our pockets, shoes, and socks of the fine desert sand.

We then took ATVs and rode to the top of the largest sand dune in the area just in time for the sunset. Looking out as far as we could, the glowing pink sun set amidst the dry desert air. From the peak it was clear that the desert — so often perceived as vast nothingness — had so much beauty and life to it. The departure of the sun only gave way to a sparkling show of billions of stars above.

Hitting a little sand with the R1250 GS before mounting a new kind of animal to ride through the Sahara Desert.

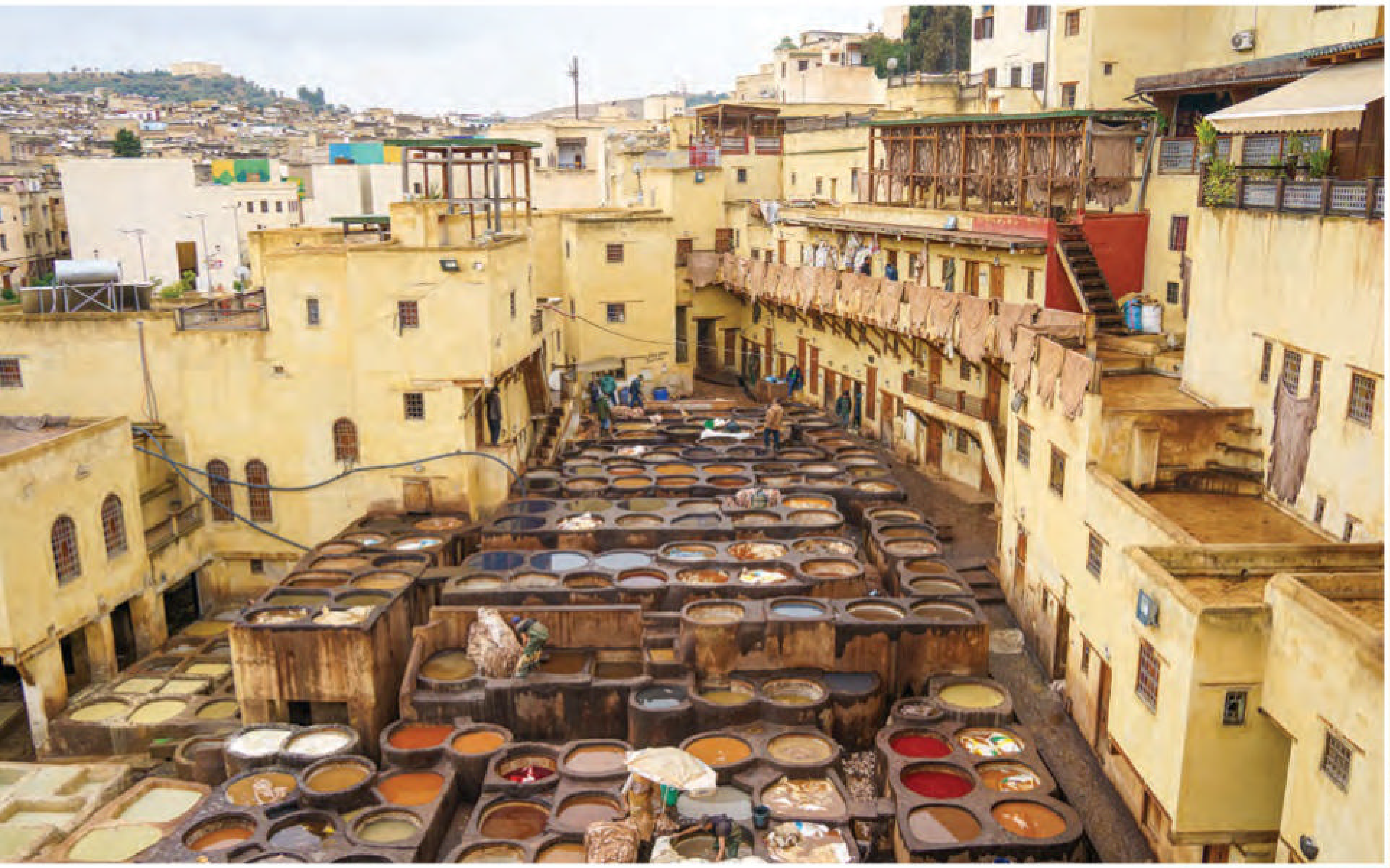
Feeding the Locals

The roads had become kinked and coiled again, and around every bend was a new sight — women washing clothes in the river, local children running to the road to wave at us, stray dogs and cats lounging in the sun, beautiful mosques and oases embedded in the desertscape. The red stone colour of buildings seemed to bleed into the backdrop of the sandstone mountains.

I had become practised in not eating all my breakfast or lunch and putting small portions of bread and meat in my pockets for the dogs and cats that I'd encounter each day. Today I had three buns and five pieces of meat. In a small mountain village, we spotted a couple monkeys and then I saw a dog.

As I went to hand the dog a piece of my bread, the monkey jumped in and snagged it from my hand; the dog looked at the monkey as if to say, "Dammit Paul, that was mine!" I scolded the monkey, although I doubt it made a difference. Three more dogs came up and all patiently waited for some food. The monkey became

There's something incredibly surreal about riding a dromedary into the middle of the Sahara Desert. It doesn't quite offer the same power as a motorcycle does but the traction is phenomenal.



The famous leather tannery in Fes offers a first-hand experience into the traditional process of leather tanning. This process has seen little change throughout the centuries and is almost as impressive as the smell. (above)

The former Pasha's kasbah that looked dilapidated on the outside but inside was beautifully decorated with different textiles like silks from China, traditional Berber rugs and walls with intricate tile work. (lower left)

distracted with other people, and I fed the dogs freely and without any monkey business.

The Centuries Change but Not Much Else

Fes is the oldest of the four imperial cities in Morocco and was founded in 789 — the medina itself has never changed. We passed through narrow, crooked alleys, moving to the sides to let elders through carrying baked goods from the communal wood oven.

We made our way to the famous leather tannery. The smell was repugnant as we looked out to see stone vats made in the ground, with different types of dye and white liquids; the hides are first treated in a vat with various mixtures of cow urine, pigeon feces, salt, water, and quicklime; then dyed and treated further. There were people jumping up and down in the vats to push the hides down and then carrying them up to the rooftops to hang them to dry out.

The Tour Coming to a Close

One would expect Morocco to offer exceptional weather, and one would be right, for the most part. Our whole trip offered up sunny days ranging between 10-28 C, but heading to the city of Chefchaouen, known as the Blue City, we were greeted with heavy rains and fog for the duration of the day. The fog thickened as we could only see the trees right beside us to remind us of where the road was — we narrowly avoided a car stopped in our lane without its lights on, while another had gone into the ditch.

As we approached Chefchaouen, we could see blue sky that bled into the blue tint of houses set against the backdrop. There, we attempted to dry out before the last day of the trip but the morning brought more rain as we embarked on the ferry back to Spain.

Every word that I imagined I would

use to describe Morocco now seems unavailing and useless. Morocco offered something that can't be defined but only experienced. With each new glimpse of scenery, and each twist of the throttle,my perspective of the world changed a little more. This had become a trip of a lifetime with some new life-long friends. Aventura Motorcycle Tours helped to make this an unforgettable trip, Carlos and Ricardo helped to make Morocco more than worthwhile to visit.

As I'm pulling out moldy pieces of bread from my jacket pocket, I'm still trying to figure out if I'll have a husband when I return to Morocco. **MM**

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF MOROCCO
VISIT: MOTORCYCLEMOJO.COM

A WORTHY RETRO

A thoroughly modern naked bike disguised as a throwback to the ’70s

STORY BY **DAVID BOOTH**
PHOTOS BY **DAVID BOOTH**
& CANADIAN KAWASAKI

I am not, with rare exceptions, a fan of retro-styled bikes. Too many — I’m thinking of Honda’s CB1100 here — tend to remind me just how bad the “good old times” really were. Others are simply poor stylistic impressions of beautiful motorcycles past (and, again, I’m looking at you Honda and that same CB1100). And still others fail to capture the fact that the oldies they seek to emulate were popular because they were the superbikes of the day, not some middle-of-the-road nostalgia-cycles aimed at the elderly and infirm. Some things are better left forgotten and first amongst them are fat, lazy motorcycles with crap suspension and seriously hum-drum engines.

That’s why I was expecting so little when I picked up Kawasaki’s latest Z900, the RS SE. A quick toot around the block, thought I, get some photos of the tank since that best captures the ’70s motif everyone seems to long for and then maybe I can get back to testing some modern adventure touring bikes. You know, real motorcycles, not just some poorly performing ode to times that were not nearly as good as we like to remember them.

> “THE BODYWORK MAY BE SCREAMING MID-’70S CLASSIC, BUT THE RUNNING GEAR IS THOROUGHLY MODERN NAKED BIKE”

Notable First Impression

That ennui lasted to, oh, about the end of Kawasaki Canada’s driveway. By then my ears had perked up (is that pretty cool-looking four-into-one even legal?), my right hand had become eager in anticipation (is the 948 cc inline-four a little perkier than I remember?) and damned if the front brakes don’t have some bite to them even just poodling around.

So, even though the RS SE looks the part of desultory pretender-to-the-past, it’s really a completely different animal. At its heart, it is, in fact, a sporty naked bike. All the period piece bits — the “Yellow Ball” paint job, requisite duck tail rear seat unit and a four-into-one exhaust system that does a pretty good Kerker imitation save for its chrome covering — are just garnishes. You know, the catsup and/or relish you normally add to disguise the fact that the hot-dog really doesn’t

David Booth thinks the Z900RS SE could make a decent track bike with the right suspension settings and tires, but is more than happy to carve corners on any road with it.

taste that good.

In this case, although said garnishes are appreciated, the meat is really good. In SE trim, for instance, the RS gains a seriously sophisticated S46 Öhlins rear shock with the requisite remote preload adjuster so you can adjust the rear ride height. There's a totally re-valved front fork that's more generously damped for serious riding. And, as the coupe de grace, Brembo threw in some M4.32 front calipers — mated to a 17.5 mm Nissan radial master cylinder with stainless-steel braided lines — that are instantly recognizable as a cut above. The bodywork may be screaming mid-'70s classic, but the running gear is thoroughly modern naked bike.

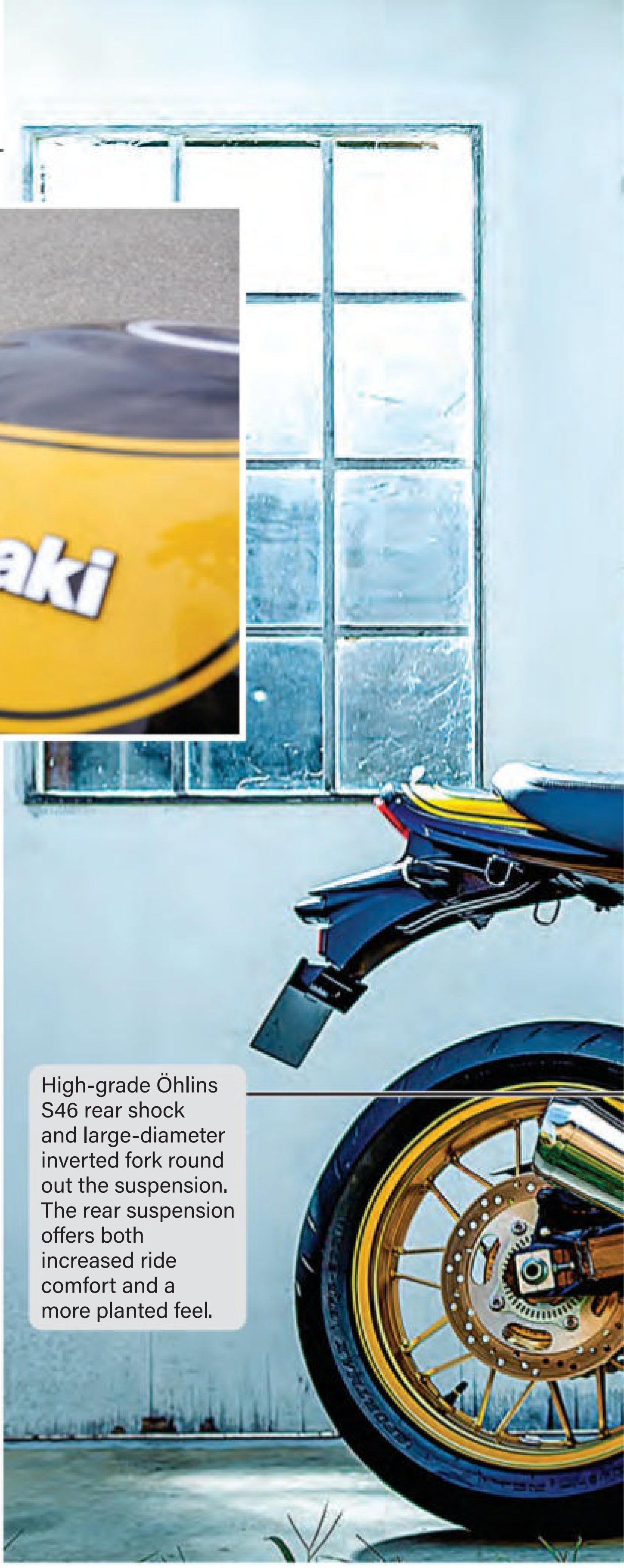
Comfortable Seating Position

Sitting on the classic pleated saddle and reaching out to the high-rise handlebar, the same dichotomy persists. The aforementioned saddle is a traditionally (almost) completely flat affair, simpler and, it must be said, far more comfortable than the sculpted seats adorning more 'modern' motorcycles.

Ditto for the handlebar which is 65 mm higher and 35 mm closer to the rider than the basic Z900s. Even the rider's pegs are 20 mm lower. Sitting on the SE, you're immediately taken back to the times of the UJM — Universal Japanese Motorcycle — when not every motorcycle had to have a specialization.

Kawasaki
Z900RS

Grab those big Brembos, though, or heel the incredibly quick-steering chassis into a high-speed bend and, all of a sudden, you're no longer in the '70s but Back-to-the-Future'd on a thoroughly modern super naked. The M4.32s are all bite and stoppies, the rear tire is a sportbike-sized 180/55ZR17 — a Bridgestone Battlax Hypersport no less — that looks pretty track-worthy to me.



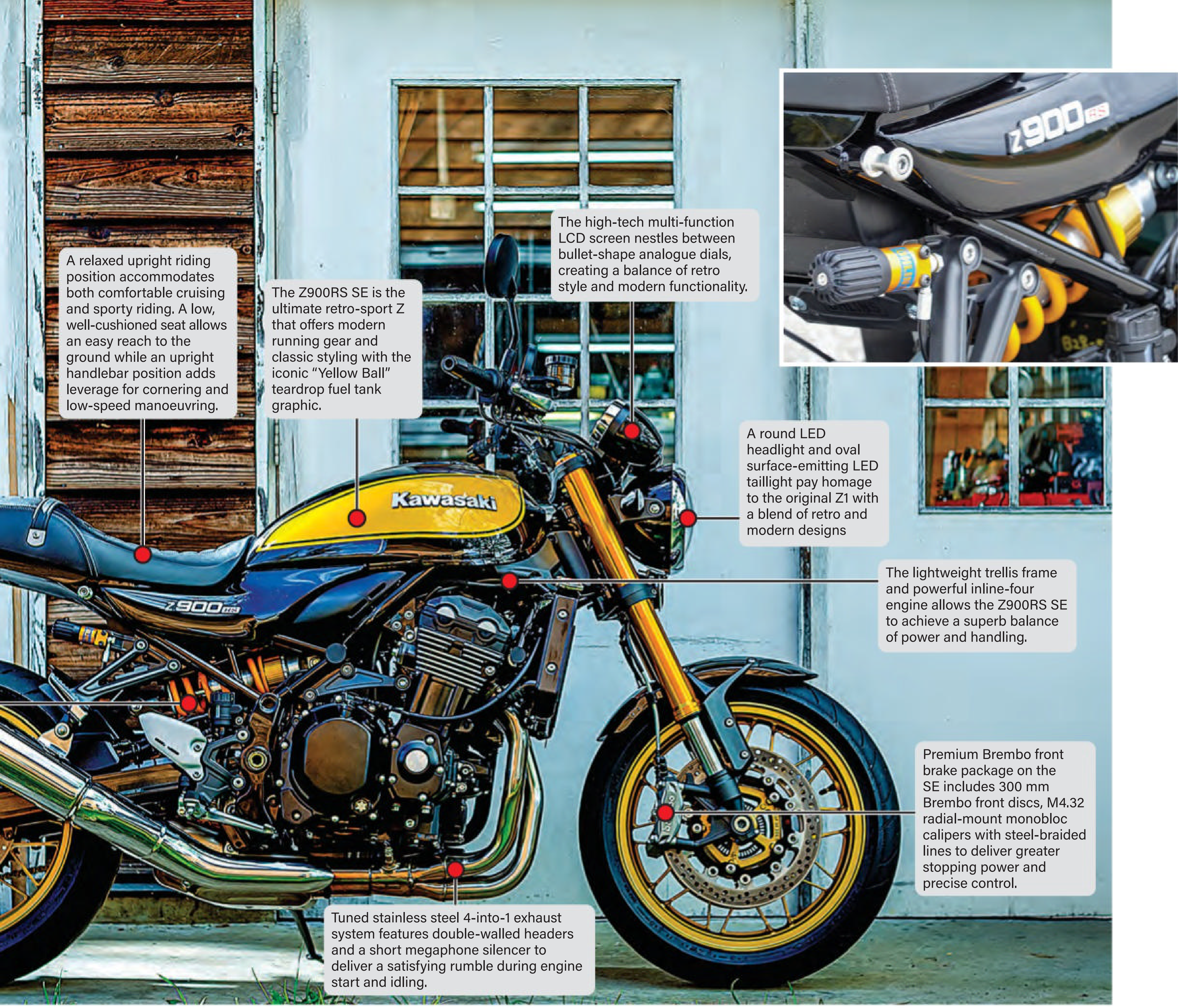
High-grade Öhlins S46 rear shock and large-diameter inverted fork round out the suspension. The rear suspension offers both increased ride comfort and a more planted feel.

Old school gauges hark back to a simpler time.

Bike of Choice

And that suspension. There's a reason Öhlins has such a stellar reputation. That you get such excellent damping — as good as many a modern sportbike and better than a few — out of something that looks like it should be suspended by old-school twin shocks is pretty darned impressive. Oh, the compression damping can occasionally be a little stiff, but it keeps the whole affair on an even keel so a little bounce over Canadian potholes is a small penalty to be paid.

No doubt I'll feel the ire of Triumph fans and Ducatisti, but I'd prefer riding the SE through some California twisties than a Speed Triple or a Monster. Hell, with the Öhlins jacked up to maximum preload and the Bridgestones still fresh,



A relaxed upright riding position accommodates both comfortable cruising and sporty riding. A low, well-cushioned seat allows an easy reach to the ground while an upright handlebar position adds leverage for cornering and low-speed manoeuvring.

The Z900RS SE is the ultimate retro-sport Z that offers modern running gear and classic styling with the iconic "Yellow Ball" teardrop fuel tank graphic.

The high-tech multi-function LCD screen nestles between bullet-shape analogue dials, creating a balance of retro style and modern functionality.

A round LED headlight and oval surface-emitting LED taillight pay homage to the original Z1 with a blend of retro and modern designs

The lightweight trellis frame and powerful inline-four engine allows the Z900RS SE to achieve a superb balance of power and handling.

Premium Brembo front brake package on the SE includes 300 mm Brembo front discs, M4.32 radial-mount monobloc calipers with steel-braided lines to deliver greater stopping power and precise control.

Tuned stainless steel 4-into-1 exhaust system features double-walled headers and a short megaphone silencer to deliver a satisfying rumble during engine start and idling.

this Z900 might make a pretty good track bike too. As long as the straights weren't too long.

It's Powerful Enough, But…

Oh, the 948-cc inline-four isn't exactly slow. *Cycle World* magazine says it dynos out at 95.24 horsepower. But in today's motorcycling world of supercharged sport-tourers and 240 hp superbikes — Ducati's latest Panigale V4 R — that might seem pretty pedestrian. Even some naked bikes are on the stupid side of 200 hp these days. By that empirical standard, the Z900 is, in RS SE trim or any other, sorely lacking.

On the other hand, the 948 cc four is plenty punchy down low and, more importantly, thanks to that four-into-one exhaust system — complete with a period-correct collector — sounds like the business. Considering the riding position — much more classic sit-up-and-beg than *au courante* boy racer — it may not be a bad thing that the Z900 doesn't boast 140 horses, lest one's primary ambition is to never wear out the front tire.

If There was a Complaint

The engine is the source of my one complaint, however. In the constant search for ever-reduced emissions, the Kawasaki's fuel injection is pretty darned cold-blooded. It took more than a few minutes to warm up and until all four 73.4 mm pistons were at full operating temperature, the throttle would hang up a bit, the engine idling up around two grand as if a thermistor prevented a return to the Kawi's normal operating idle of 1,200 pm.

Not only that: The throttle response, even when the radiator was at full boil, tended to be quite snatchy at low speeds. It wasn't early Honda RC51 abrupt nor does the idle wander

> "I'D PREFER RIDING THE SE THROUGH SOME CALIFORNIA TWISTIES THAN A SPEED TRIPLE OR A MONSTER"

like EFI-ed Triumphs of old, but, were I the owner of a new Z900RS SE, the first thing I'd do is get my friend Rob Egan at Brooklin Cycle to Woolich the ECU. I suspect the motor is running pretty lean.

But, other than that — okay, maybe a little fancier radial front brake master cylinder to go along with the eye-catching M4.32s — there's little about this Z900 that I'd change. The Z900RS SE is the motorcycling surprise of my 2022. It's as comfy and familiar — at least to us "olds" — as a rocking chair and offers the sharp steering we could have only dreamed about "back in the day."

And doesn't it bark out a classic (exhaust) tune when you get the revs up. Hell, there's a couple of grand saved not having to buy an aftermarket exhaust, making the RS SE's MSRP of $15,599 even more affordable. That it also looks the business, is surprisingly faithful to the original in all the important ways it should be and is truly one of the most sonorous nakeds available is just the icing on the cake. All things retrospective should be so fun.

The Z900RS SE was my favourite bike of 2022 and the first new bike in quite some time I've thought would look good in the Booth garage. Blessed be those retro-bikes that live up to the spirit of their predecessors. **MM**

> "THANKS TO THAT FOUR-INTO-ONE EXHAUST SYSTEM — COMPLETE WITH A PERIOD-CORRECT COLLECTOR — SOUNDS LIKE THE BUSINESS"

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF 2022 KAWASAKI Z900RS SE **VISIT: MOTORCYCLEMOJO.COM**

MANUFACTURER'S SPECS

LIST PRICE	$15,999
WARRANTY	12 months, unlimited mileage
CONTACT	kawasaki.ca
ENGINE TYPE	Inline-four
DISPLACEMENT	948 cc
POWER	N/A
TORQUE	N/A
BORE AND STROKE	73.4 x 56.0 mm
COMPRESSION RATIO	10.8:1
FUEL DELIVERY	Electronic Fuel Injection
TRANSMISSION	6-speed
FINAL DRIVE TYPE	Chain
FRONT SUSPENSION	Inverted 41 mm fork with compression and rebound damping and spring preload adjustability
REAR SUSPENSION	Horizontal Öhlins S46 gas-charged shock with rebound damping and spring preload adjustability
WHEEL TRAVEL	Front: 120 mm (4.7 in.) Rear: 140 mm (5.5 in.)
BRAKES	Front: Two 300 mm rotors, 4-piston calipers Rear: Single 250 mm disc with single piston caliper, ABS
WHEELBASE	1,470 mm (57.9 in.)
RAKE AND TRAIL	25 degrees/98 mm
TIRES	Front: 120/70ZR17 Rear: 180/55ZR17
WEIGHT (WET)	214 kg (472 lb)
SEAT HEIGHT	810 mm (31.9 in.)
FUEL CAPACITY	17 litres
FUEL ECONOMY (CLAIMED)	N/A
FUEL RANGE (ESTIMATED)	N/A

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IN SEARCH OF A LOST SPIRIT

Mountains, rivers and scenic byways abound in the Pacific Northwest, making the area a rider's paradise

STORY BY **ANNA FRAZER**
PHOTOS BY **ANNA & ROBERT FRAZER**

"O**regon seems like a** long way away, I think that I lost my motorcycle spirit, I am sorry to be a grump," my husband, Robert, said unenthusiastically a few days before our two-week motorcycle trip to the United States in the summer of 2022. After the Covid pandemic, Robert seemed to have lost his passion to travel internationally. But with a little persuasion on my part, he agreed to tag along.

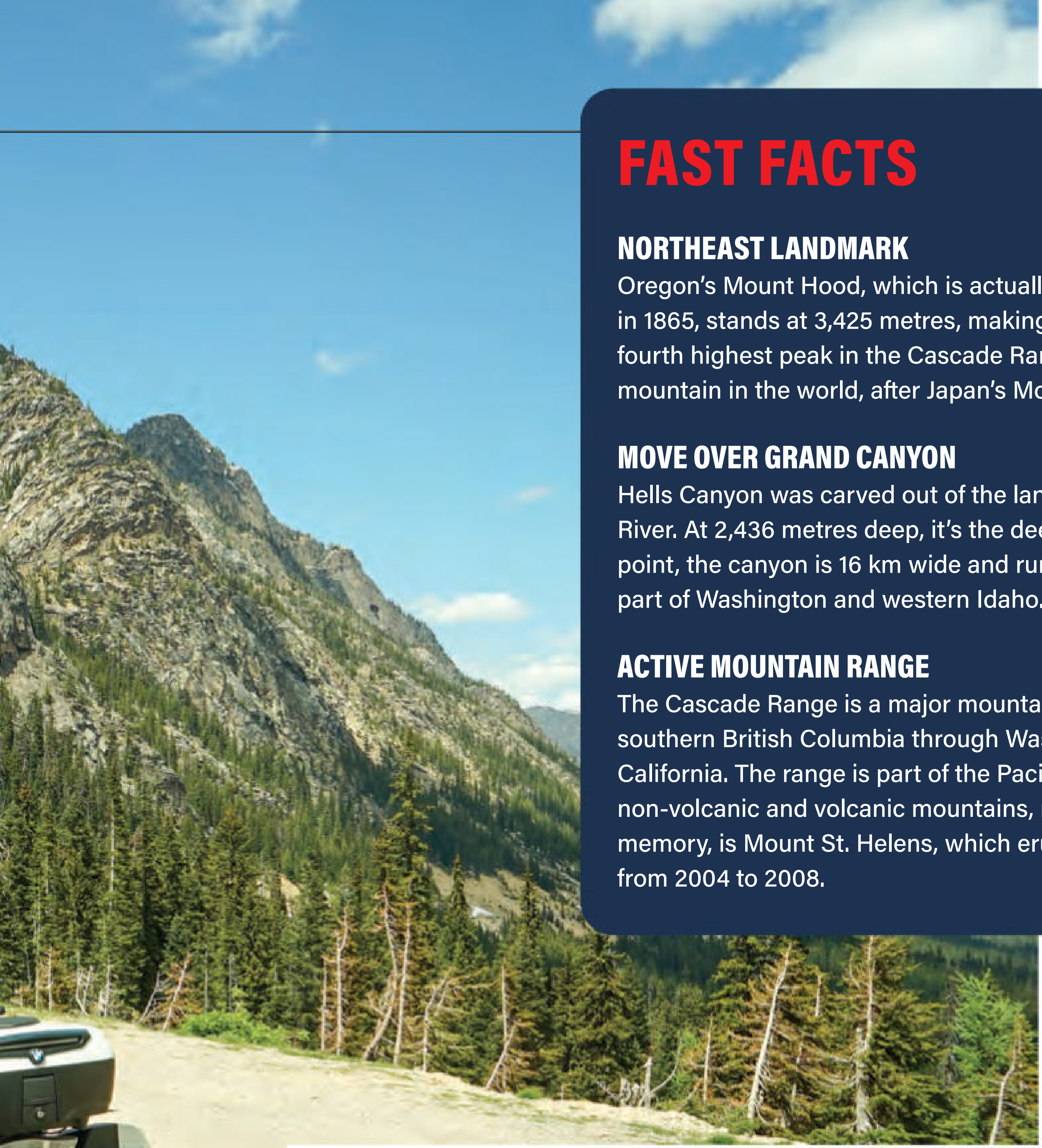
After crossing the Canada-U.S. border, we headed toward the North Cascades Highway 20, one of the most beautiful roads in the Pacific Northwest. The road starts gently curving along the Skagit River through green pastures, elk viewing areas and the small towns of Lyman, Hamilton, and Concrete.

East of Concrete, the road picks up the pace before it arrives at the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. There are many scenic pullouts along the route, and we chose the Gorge Creek Falls and Diablo Lake Vista points.

At Gorge Creek Falls, the pedestrian walkway leads to the bridge to view water cascading 74 metres down the mountain before entering Gorge Lake.

At the Diablo Lake Vista, the emerald water surrounded by mountain peaks creates a postcard view. The east side of the Cascades Range gave us endless twists and magnificent mountains.

The temperatures increase with the descent to the Methow Valley and the town of Winthrop. Winthrop was



FAST FACTS

NORTHEAST LANDMARK

Oregon's Mount Hood, which is actually a dormant stratovolcano that last erupted in 1865, stands at 3,425 metres, making it the highest point in Oregon and the fourth highest peak in the Cascade Range. It's also the second-most climbed mountain in the world, after Japan's Mount Fujiyama.

MOVE OVER GRAND CANYON

Hells Canyon was carved out of the land about six million years ago by the Snake River. At 2,436 metres deep, it's the deepest gorge in North America. At its widest point, the canyon is 16 km wide and runs along the eastern border of Oregon and part of Washington and western Idaho.

ACTIVE MOUNTAIN RANGE

The Cascade Range is a major mountain range in the Northwest. It runs from southern British Columbia through Washington, Oregon and into northern California. The range is part of the Pacific Ocean's Ring of Fire and contains non-volcanic and volcanic mountains, most notably of which, at least in recent memory, is Mount St. Helens, which erupted in 1980 with smaller eruptions from 2004 to 2008.

> “AT THE DIABLO LAKE VISTA, THE EMERALD WATER SURROUNDED BY MOUNTAIN PEAKS CREATES A POSTCARD VIEW”

Cascades Range Highway 20 is one of the most beautiful roads in the Pacific Northwest according to the author. (above) Diablo Lake. (right)

Washington Pass in the Cascades mountain range.

established in the late 1800s when gold was discovered in the area, but the Western theme in the form of wooden boardwalks and Old West design buildings was introduced in 1972 to attract tourists.

Finding a Home Base

After stopping in the lake town of Chelan (pronounced Shae-laan), named after the Native American tribe, we continued to The Dalles, Oregon, an excellent place for shamrock-style day trips to explore the Columbia River Gorge and the roads of Central and Eastern Oregon.

At an elevation of just over 2,120 metres, Blewett Pass on Hwy 97 made the ride cool and pleasant. The pass runs across the Wenatchee Mountains between the Wenatchee and the Yakima Rivers and eventually arrives at the greatly anticipated Canyon Road, Hwy 821, south of Ellensburg.

Canyon Road travels through the canyon created by the Yakima River; the river twists and turns and so does the road. The road plays a cat and mouse game with the river, chasing it along its banks, then climbing up and watching it from above, and then pouncing back down again and galloping level with it. The road encourages speeds over the posted 45 miles per hour, but speeding is not recommended unless one wants to test the local traffic enforcement.

Columbia River Gorge

Eventually we found ourselves in Goldendale, fighting strong cross winds and focusing on keeping our bikes on the road and not sliding into the weeds. Finally, we were at the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic area, a majestic river canyon 130 km long and up to 1,220 metres deep.

Past Goldendale, we chose Hwy 14 on the river's north side. The tarmac floats above the river with open and dramatic sweeping vistas.

While in The Dalles we planned two riding days: the Gorge and Eastern Oregon.

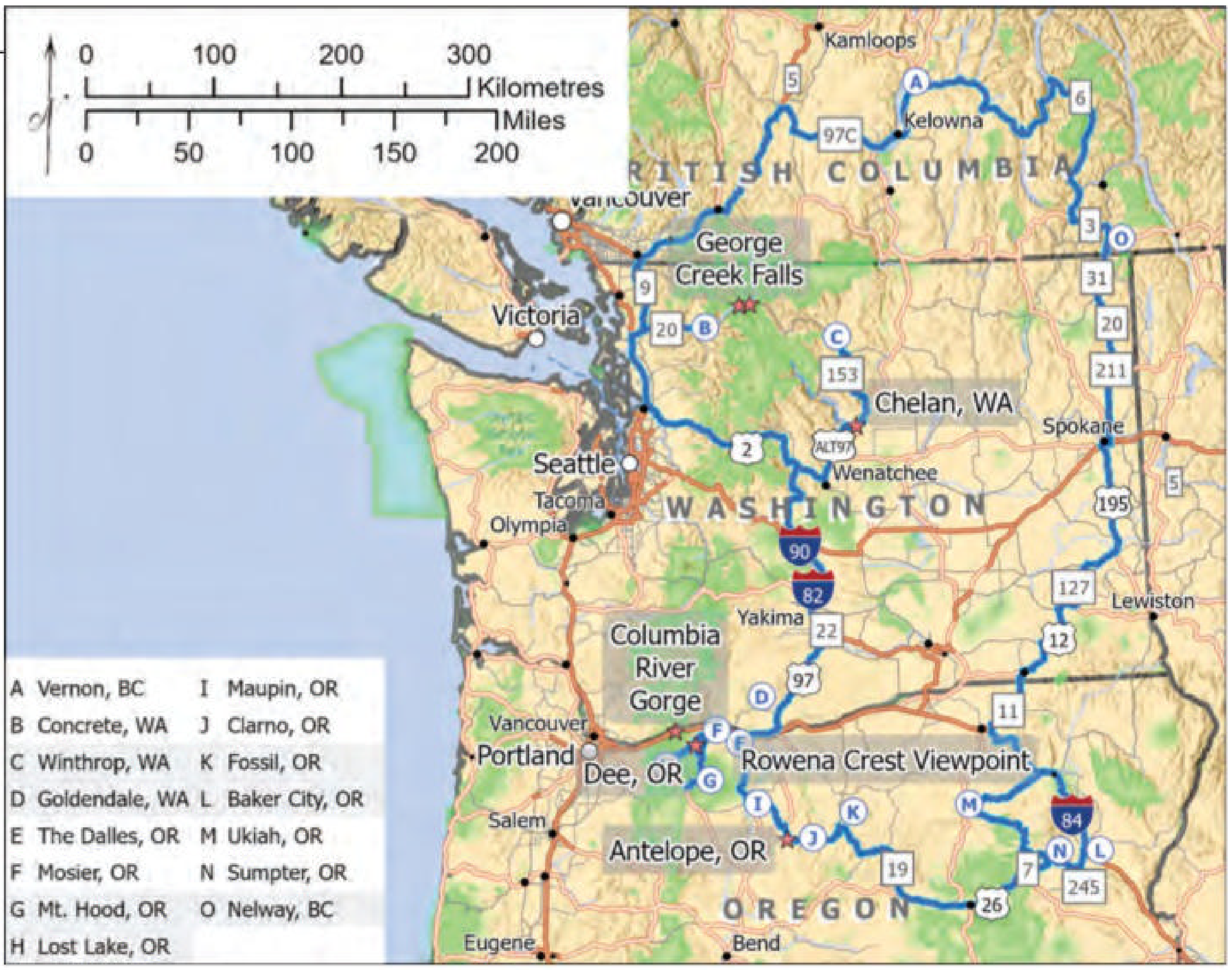
The 120 km Historic Columbia River Highway 30 was built between 1913 and 1922 as a scenic highway along the Columbia River. It has become famous due to its elegance, scenery, tunnels, and waterfalls.

In the summer of 2022, the highway became so crowded that pre-registration was required for the waterfalls section. The section between The Dalles and Mosier is my favourite and, luckily, we did not need to pre-register. The road is narrow, curvy, devoid of traffic and surrounded by gentle slopes carpeted with wild grasses and iridescent blue and purple wildflowers. The best time to visit is the end of May, but the late and wet spring in 2022 resulted in late blooms, so we were immersed in the gentle wildflowers' aromas.

Majestic Mount Hood

Rowena Crest Viewpoint delivered panoramic views showcasing the natural beauty of the gorge. After soaking

The Gold Nugget Saloon complete with hitching post for your horse in Shaniko, Oregon.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0 50 100 150 200 Miles
A Vernon, BC
B Concrete, WA
C Winthrop, WA
D Goldendale, WA
E The Dalles, OR
F Mosier, OR
G Mt. Hood, OR
H Lost Lake, OR
I Maupin, OR
J Clarno, OR
K Fossil, OR
L Baker City, OR
M Ukiah, OR
N Sumpter, OR
O Nelway, BC
Kamloops
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BRITISH COLUMBIA
Vancouver
George Creek Falls
Victoria
Chelan, WA
Spokane
Seattle
Tacoma
Olympia
Wenatchee
WASHINGTON
Yakima
Lewiston
Columbia River Gorge
Vancouver
Portland
Dee, OR
Rowena Crest Viewpoint
Salem
Antelope, OR
OREGON
Eugene
Bend

in the views, we headed along Hwy 35 to the farmland at the foothills of Mt. Hood, where the most iconic photos of Mt. Hood are taken, since the mountain dominates the landscape.

In the spirit of aromatherapy, we were looking for a lavender farm, which we found by randomly choosing left and right turns. Unfortunately, the late spring delayed the lavender season, and we did not get to see the full glamour of the blooms.

We motored to the Lost Lake Road east of Dee. When the road enters the Mt. Hood National Forest, it becomes narrower and twistier, gaining elevation at the same time. The pavement was good, and we enjoyed the brisk pace all the way to Lost Lake.

The lake was named in the 19th century by Mack Hollamon, a hunting and fishing guide who only found this lake after it was shown to him by the Native Americans.

The Native American legend of Lost Lake says that a great warrior once disobeyed his guardian spirit, a great elk, and killed more animals than he needed, unknowingly wounding the great elk. The great elk died in the waters of the lake. Since then, the Native Americans have called it the Lake of Lost Spirits, as beneath the calm waters lay the spirits of thousands of the dead and above the waters the face of Mount Hood stands as a monument to them.

Popular Riding Area

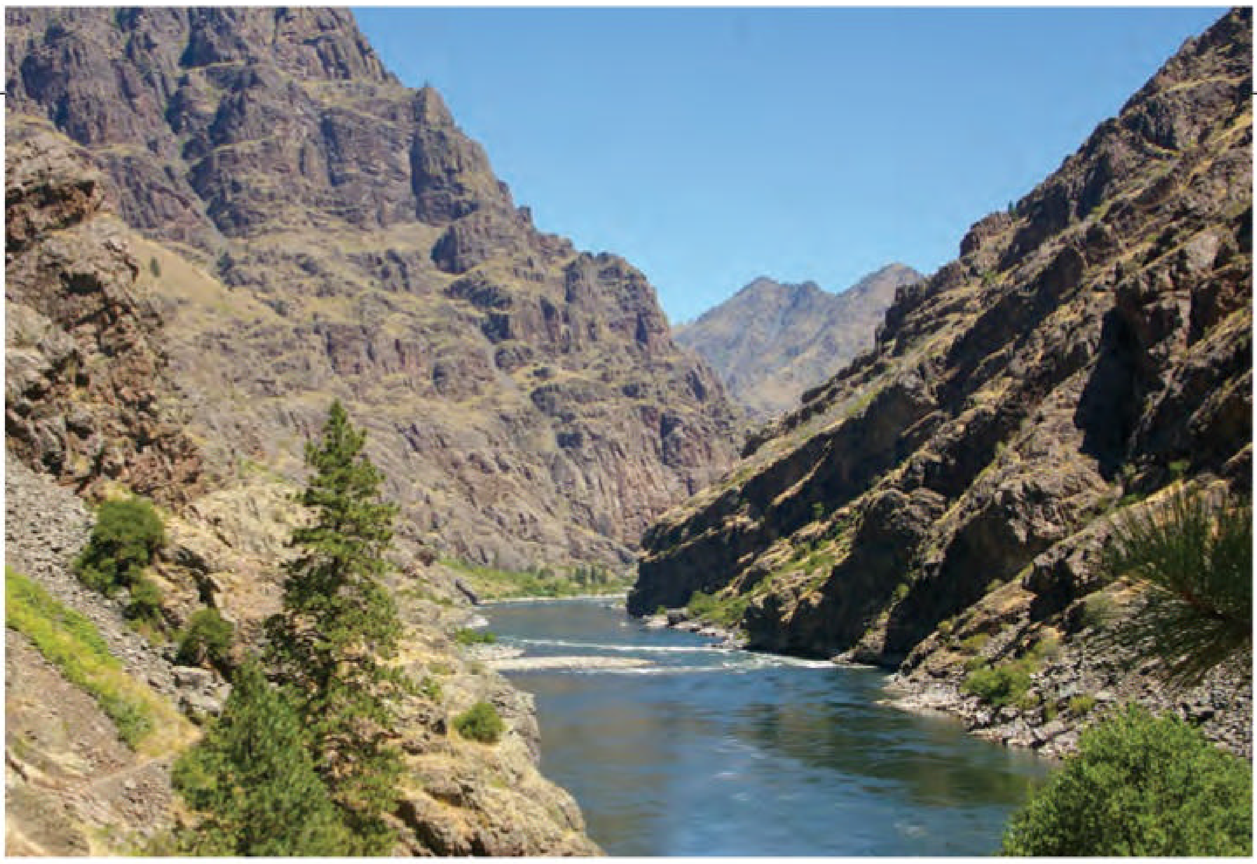
Eastern Oregon is very popular amongst riders. The change in scenery from our previous day was dramatic. Hwy 197, known as The Dalles California Highway, quickly climbed up to the high plateau and the Columbia River disappeared from the mirrors, with Mt. Hood continuing to dominate the landscape.

The road waltzed across the high plateau with sweeping curves. Breathing the fragrant air, we motored to the town of Maupin at the bottom of the Deschutes River Canyon. The approach to Maupin is swift and sudden, as the highway suddenly wakes up from a slow waltz and sharply dives down toward the town.

One of the best-known ghost towns in Oregon is Shaniko on the Journey Through Time Scenic Byway. In the past, the town was known as the “Wool Capital of the World.” It is hard to believe that, in the early 1900s, the town was a transportation hub, a wool shipping centre, and a regional centre for wool, wheat, cattle and sheep production.

Shaniko started its decline in the 1930s, when an alternate rail route linked Portland to Bend via the Deschutes River Canyon. Now, there are about two dozen residents and the weathered structures of a closed

Near Clarno and the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.



The Snake River and Hells Canyon which separates Oregon from Idaho. (right)

historic hotel, a schoolhouse, stores and a jail. The town is a popular destination for "ghost town" tourists and motorcyclists exploring the superb roads of Eastern Oregon.

History Recorded in Stone

Our ride followed Scenic Route 218 south to Antelope and then east to Clarno. Antelope is a destination for fossil-lovers who visit the near-by John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. The Monument comprises a diverse record of over 2,000 species of plants and animals dating from six million to 54 million years ago, and forms one of the most complete fossil records in the world.

While in Antelope we also learned about the events of the mid-1980s, involving a commune movement and criminal activities. They became the subject of the program *Bio Attack* and a Netflix documentary *Wild Wild Country*.

The jewel of all motorcycle roads is the 56-kilometre stretch of Route 218 between Antelope and the town of Fossil, also known as Shaniko-Fossil Highway. The winding highway, with its banked corners, is perfectly engineered for motorcycles. These corners guide the rider from turn to turn, creating a smooth riding flow.

Ancient Trails

For our next destination of Baker City, we proceeded through the town of Heppner and crossed the Blue Mountains towards Ukiah. The territory between the Columbia Gorge and Blue Mountains was travelled by Native Americans — the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla — for thousands of years prior to the arrival of European-American settlers. The settlers used the land as sheep and cattle ranges in the mid-1800s due to the rye grasses growing along the local creeks.

Heppner is home to one of the oldest courthouses in Oregon, built in 1902 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is recommended to fill up in Heppner as there is a lack of gas stations from there to Baker City. Leaving Heppner, we continued southeast along the Willow Creek Road to Ukiah.

The road, which is part of the Blue Mountains Scenic Byway, first slices through dry desert surrounded by gentle brown hills, gradually gaining elevation to over 1,525 metres as it traverses the Blue Mountains. Occasional trees are replaced by dense pine forests. Ukiah is one of two places in Oregon that hold the official coldest record of -48 C, in the winter of 1933.

Gold Mine Claims Still Available

Our journey continued along National Forest Roads 52 and 73 through the Umatilla National Forest crossing multiple creeks. The Native American word Umatilla means "water running through sand." At higher elevations, there are a few old gold mine sites carved on the side of the hills, such as the Buffalo Mine and the Cougar Mine in Granite. Amateur gold miners can still make mining claims in this area.

A cold and wet spring in the Pacific Northwest brought in pleasant temperatures in Eastern Oregon, where usual July daytime temperatures would be over 30 C. While in Baker City, we visited the iconic Hells Canyon and explored the gold country.

The Hells Canyon east of Baker City can be reached via Hwy 84 through barren hills and then the fertile farmland of Richland and Halfway. Before plunging into the Hells Canyon, we stopped by the Hells Canyon overlook. The road to the overlook passes through a very pretty forest filled with fragrant air and follows the twists of the gaily bubbling North Pine Creek. At 1,645 metres of elevation, the overlook provides dramatic vistas of the Hells Canyon and the Seven Devils Mountains on the border with Idaho.

Idaho's Most Scenic Byway

The border with Idaho is the middle of the Snake River, and the famous Hells Canyon Road is in Idaho across the bridge from the Oxbow Dam. The 35 km road is considered one of the most scenic byways in Idaho and runs in the deepest gorge in North America at 2,436 metres deep. A narrow serpentine two lane road is squeezed between the overhanging canyon walls with views of a sparkling river below.

Eventually, the road descends and runs along the river which then turns into a lake. The road ends at the Hells Canyon Dam, where we had to turn back, but really, the best roads need to be ridden in both directions anyway.

The small town of Sumpter in the Elkhorn Mountains is a find for gold rush historians, as it's one of the earliest mining settlements in the Pacific Northwest; it was a booming gold mining town in the late 19th century with more than 19 km of deep shaft gold mining tunnels.

Train Ride Back in Time

The Sumpter Valley railway ran for 129 km and is featured in the 2020 season of the series *Gold Rush*. Now the town's population is about 200 people, and its main business is tourists who visit the Sumpter Valley Dredge Heritage area.

The dredge is a massive piece of equipment designed as a dry land ship, which dug through the valley in search of gold leaving piles of debris along the Powder River. The current dredge is the last of three built in the early 20th century, it was operational until 1954 and produced over $4 million in gold during its lifetime.

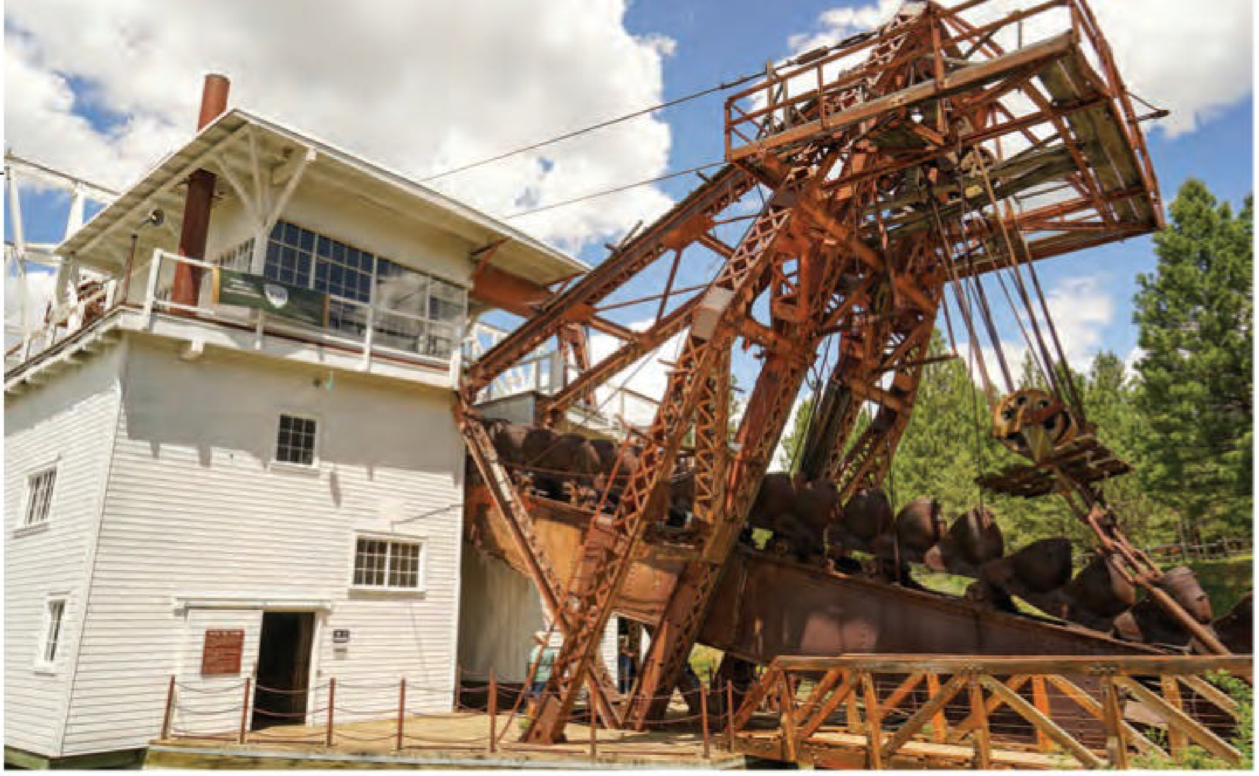
On the day of our visit, the historic Sumpter Valley railroad was open. We boarded the vintage train and enjoyed a relaxing trip back in time through the heart of gold country.

After our expedition into history, we proceeded to explore Hwy 245, known as the Dooley Mountain Highway. The private toll road was owned by John J. Dooley until 1889 and was named after him when it became public.

Acrophobics Need Not Apply

The 24 km of Hwy 245 became the true riding highlight of the day. The slim, snaky road tightly clings to the cliff side similar to some parts of the Pikes Peak Highway in Colorado.

Riding Hwy 245 was quite an unnerving experience. With very little shoulder my eyes kept sliding down the cliff, hoping the rest of me didn't follow. The road was not for those who are afraid of heights.



This is one of three Sumpter Valley gold dredges that were put into service between 1912 and 1934.

Leaving Baker City, we headed north via cold and rainy Deadman Pass on Interstate 84. The pass's name is a result of an accident when a teamster driving a wagon during the Bannock War in 1878 was killed by a nearby Native American tribe.

I don't recall a single time when it did not rain on Deadman Pass, and this time was not an exception. The pass, located at an elevation of about 1,100 metres, is famous for the most severe and changeable conditions in the Pacific Northwest. The 610-metre climb is full of double hairpin turns as well as a six per cent grade. Descending 610 metres in 10 km is just as exhilarating. The viewpoint on the top of Cabbage Hill provides a spectacular panorama of the endless fields of Eastern Washington.

Heading Back Home

After visiting friends in northern Idaho, we rode back to Canada along Hwy 20 following the Pend Oreille River route of David Thompson, the Canadian trader and surveyor. Thompson was the first person to explore the Columbia River from source to mouth.

After setting up a trading post in Montana called Kullyspell, now the town of Kalispell, Thompson explored the river flowing west from Lake Pend Oreille, which he called the Saleesh River. He hoped that the river would provide a route to the Columbia on which he could travel to the Pacific Ocean.

Thompson attempted to navigate the Pend Oreille River twice, however, both attempts were unsuccessful. There is a waymarking plaque dedicated to David Thompson at a viewpoint along Highway 20 by Ruby. Many places in the Pacific Northwest carry Thompson's name, such as Thompson Falls in Montana, and Thompson River in B.C.

At the Nelway border crossing, Canada greeted us with cooler temperatures and spectacular scenery along the mountainous section of the Crowsnest Hwy 3 all the way to Castlegar and further on Hwy 6 to Nakusp.

Our ride from Nakusp to the Lower Mainland was along the energetic Hwy 6 traversing the wilderness of the Monashee Mountains between Arrow Lake and Vernon packed with plentiful corners and endless entertainment.

On our trip we rode beautiful roads, discovered historic places and learned about people who made the Pacific Northwest the place we love today. "I think I got my riding spirit back," said Robert with a smile after settling on the back deck with a cold beverage and a map book. **MM**

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF PACIFIC NORTHWEST
VISIT: MOTORCYCLEMOJO.COM

WHAT NEW RIDERS NEED TO KNOW

Listen to good advice from someone who knows and understands

STORY AND PHOTOS BY **RONN CALDERON**

Motorcycles can be a practical form of transportation but overall, they are fun toys for big boys and girls. For most new riders, getting a motorcycle is more of an emotional and impulse decision than, say, buying a first car. "It's shiny, sexy, I want it … I'll figure out the rest later" — that sort of thing. Part of the "rest," however, is licencing, training, gear and, also, *gasp*, insurance.

Unfortunately, due to the impulse-buy nature of motorcycles, too many new riders end up doing things exactly backwards, painting themselves into a corner more times than not. Many people buy a bike before even getting a motorcycle licence, then wonder why it is so hard to get on the road. I have never met anyone who has bought a car before knowing how to drive, much less before having a beginner licence, but I see this with motorcycles on almost a daily basis.

PROCEED IN THE CORRECT ORDER

What do you think the insurance rate would look like for a 24-year-old first-year rider who just bought a used 1000 cc supersport to "learn on"? Using auto insurance as a comparison, imagine what the rate would be for a 24-year-old wanting a Corvette to "learn how to drive." Regardless of the rate, that doesn't sound like a good idea — to me, at least.

Preparing a meal starting from the last step of the recipe will most likely end in disaster. Motorcycles are no different and when the right things are done in the right order, getting on the road is quick and easy; even the insurance rates are not that bad. So, what are "the right things"? What is "the right order"? Every province in Canada has different rules and processes when it comes to motorcycle licencing and insurance, but here are some key points to make your life easier no matter where you live:

IDEAS FOR A BETTER EXPERIENCE

Do not get a beginner's licence in the dead of winter. Depending on your province, it's the duration of the licence that is commonly the culprit here. For example, in Ontario the beginners licence (M1) is only valid for 90 days. If you write it in November it will have expired by the time spring rolls around, meaning you will have to do the whole test over again. A better idea would be to book the rider training first, then write the beginners licence test closer to the course dates.

Book and complete rider training before you purchase a bike. Not only does rider training prepare you with the basic skills you need to start safely on the road, passing the course first also helps your insurance rate, and in some cases the discount for rider training is massive. So far so good, but here is another reason: Many rider training schools have a variety of bikes in their fleet for you to try safely in a parking lot. I know plenty of people who completely changed their mind on which motorcycle to buy after trying different bikes on the course.

Start on a smaller engine motorcycle. A good rule of thumb is to start on something under 500 cc, as many insurance carriers do not surcharge smaller bikes based on style: sport bike, cruiser, adventure, dual sport, or scooter. Not only do smaller bikes have lower rates, but you will become a better rider faster without the bike scaring the pants off you. There are motorcycles with small engines that are built for taller riders, and bikes with bigger engines with low seat heights. Pick the motorcycle that best suits your height, weight, style and, most importantly, your skill level.

Always get an insurance quote before you buy a motorcycle. Not all bikes are rated the same way, especially when it comes to sport bikes. Again, with sub-500 cc bikes, you don't have much to worry about, but once you get into the 600, 750, 1000, etc. range, you definitely want to know ahead of time if the particular model has a surcharge on the rate, or if the insurance company can even cover it at all. Contacting a broker first is a good way to save time as they can compare rates from different companies for you, or you can call individual places on your own. Regardless, always make sure you know what the insurance looks like before you finalize the purchase.

Motorcycles are like an entry pass to a fun new world that is way bigger than you ever imagined, but it begins with that first step. Start the journey the right way and you will save yourself time, money and headaches. Ride safe everyone!

Ronn Calderon has over 17 years experience as an insurance professional, has held a motorcycle licence since 2006 and has been a track day enthusiast since 2010. He's been a guest speaker at countless events explaining insurance and he's pretty sure he's the only insurance person in Canada to fight and lobby for certain "restricted" sport bikes to be correctly rated and has successfully gotten at least seven models released over the years. His current rides are: 2019 Triumph Street Triple 765R (street), 2008 Suzuki GSXR600 (track) and a 2020 Kawasaki Ninja 400 (track). **MM**

FAST FACTS

Women account for almost 20 per cent of all riders in Canada. Compare that to eight per cent in 1998.

The Covid pandemic years (2020 – 2021) saw 41 per cent increase in Canadian motorcycle sales compared to 2019.

Over 66,000 new motorcycles were sold in Canada in 2021, and over 61,000 sold in Canada in 2022.

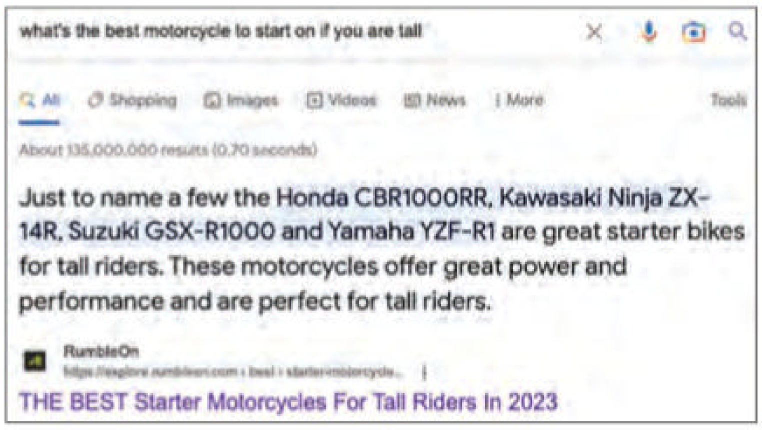
Fifty per cent of motorcycle accidents involve riders with less than five months on the road.

Studies show full face helmets offer 61.4 per cent more impact protection than half helmets

Have you ever wondered about the distribution of motorcycles by province? Wonder no more — Quebec-34%, Ontario-30%, Alberta-15%, Atlantic Canada-8%, British Columbia and Yukon-8%, Saskatchewan and Manitoba- 5%.

Beginner riding courses use small displacement bikes so that the rider isn't intimidated by having too much power.

> "IT'S IMPORTANT TO LISTEN TO PROFESSIONALS BEFORE TURNING TO THE MISINFORMATION FOUND ONLINE LIKE THIS GOOGLE SEARCH"



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Please check for road updates prior to following one of our routes

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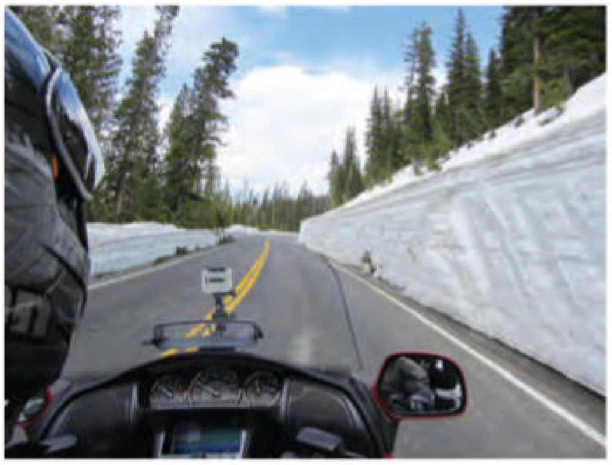
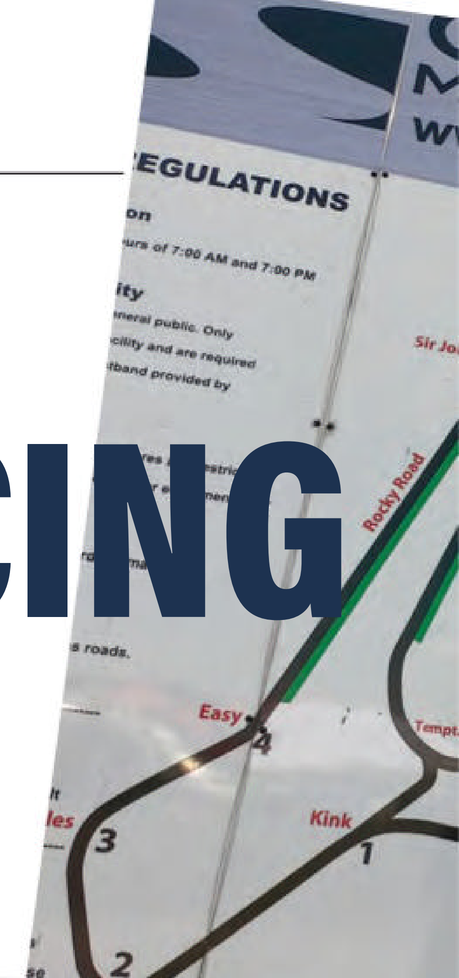


MotorcycleMojo.com

Vintage ENDURANCE RACING

Small displacement engines and shift patterns be damned, a day on the track is still a ton of fun

STORY BY **PAT BOYD**
PHOTOS BY **PAT BOYD & BILL MURPHY**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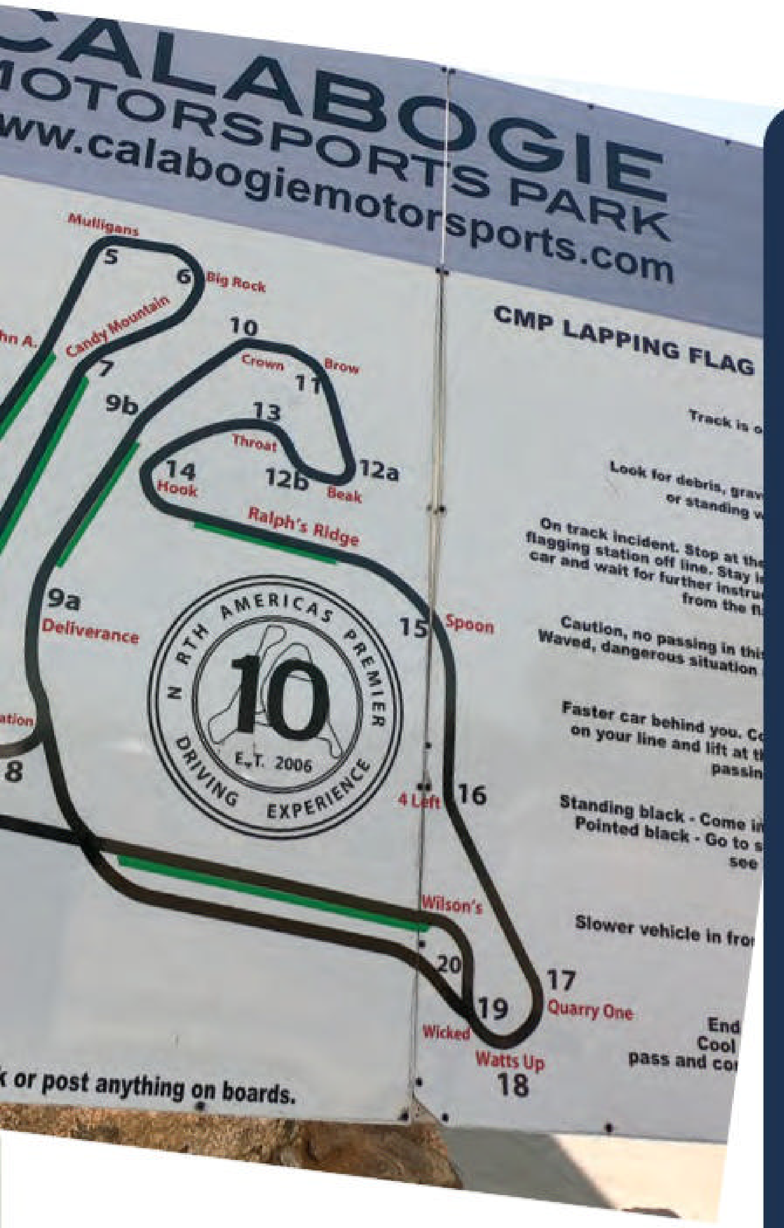
> “THE VRRA OFFERS A VERY UN-INTIMIDATING WAY TO ENTER INTO RACING WITH THIS ENDURANCE SERIES”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Look for debris, gravel or standing water
On track incident. Stop at the flagging station off line. Stay in car and wait for further instructions from the flagger
Caution, no passing in this sector. Waved, dangerous situation
Faster car behind you. Continue on your line and lift at the passing
Standing black - Come in
Pointed black - Go to see
Slower vehicle in front
or post anything on boards.

Three nights before the VRRA endurance race at Calabogie, Alan Burns texted me a photo of a bike with no wheels and no tank or bodywork. I thought he bought another race bike but, no, it was the actual Yamaha R3 we were racing later in the week. He just installed his Superbike engine (is there such a thing when it's 321 cc?) and was pretty excited. "It's alive and tomorrow I'll do dyno runs" he texted.

We were racing in the four-round Vintage Road Racing Association (VRRA) Endurance series. Four Fridays of two-hour endurance races. Two years ago, Alan invited me to join him in this series on his Yamaha R3. The 2020 series was pretty much a Covid write-off but, in 2021, we were able to race at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park (CTMP) and Shannonville Motorsport Park, both in Ontario, and we actually won in the Modern Lightweight category. I was surprised at how well we did, especially against a lot of Kawasaki 400s and excellent riders, but sometimes there are awards for good attendance!

Team Background

Back when I was racing, my other hobby on the weekend was teaching

FAST FACTS

A LONG HISTORY

Canadian Tire Motorsport Park, formally known as Mosport, opened for its first race in May 1961. In 1967, Mike Hailwood won the only Canadian World Championship 500 cc Motorcycle Grand Prix. In 2017, history repeated with a star-studded 50th anniversary celebration race weekend, which attracted a number of the original racers from the 1967 Canadian Grand Prix.

VINTAGE ROAD RACING

The Vintage Road Racing Association is Canada's classic and vintage road racing organization and is the oldest such organization in North America. It was founded in 1980 by a group of enthusiasts who wanted to get their treasured machines back on the track. With a class for virtually every motorcycle manufactured from 1930 to 1996, why not dust off that old machine in your garage and come out for some friendly competition? Also racing in the Endurance series is a class called Modern Lightweight for machines under 400 cc. Go to vrra.ca for more info.

VRRA ENDURANCE SERIES

The VRRA Race School starts the season on May 25 with motorcycle and sidecar training programs for all skill levels. Then the Endurance Series kicks off on May 26-28 with the Quinte TT at Shannonville (shannonville.com); the VRRA Summer Classic continues at Calabogie (calabogiemotorsports.com) on June 30-July 2; then the VRRA Vintage Festival is held at Canadian Tire Motorsport Park (canadiantiremotorsportpark.com) on August 11-13; and the fourth and final round, called the VRRA Grand Prix, returns to Shannonville and runs from September 1-3. If being on the track isn't your thing, why not go and spectate?

PERRY
CSBK
125
SeasonForMom
CATHY
113

Writer Pat Boyd (left) with Glenn Cauley, the team's pit crew for the endurance races, ham it up for the camera.

motorcycle courses. Alan, myself and three other instructors had a great time racing in Amateur 600 at the Canadian Nationals or club level races at various tracks. We called ourselves Team Shoulder Check. Very fitting, because we couldn't shake the safe street habit of shoulder-checking even when we were on the racetrack.

Of course, when you're on the racetrack, only the slow racers would look over their shoulders. All focus should be straight ahead: You're losing time if you look backwards or over your shoulder. Mind you, one of our guys, Dan Henri, won the first televised National Amateur 600 in 2003, and in 2004 I set a Shannonville lap record. Alan picked up speed years later and is now very fast.

In 2019, Alan's dear wife passed away from health issues and Alan subsequently fully immersed himself into track activity. He was lucky enough to have his son race with him for a couple of years until his son started his own family.

The Older I Get, The Faster I Am

As Alan aged, he seemed to get faster and faster. I started calling him Benjamin Button due to his increasing youthfulness with every year that brought him closer to 60. At age 59, he, until recently, held the Lightweight lap record at Calabogie Motorsports Park of 2:23 minutes on his Yamaha R3, a lap time I'd be happy to achieve nowadays on my 600 cc track bike.

Ten years ago, I had my own health issues and had a miserable 2012 getting treated for colorectal cancer, which just came out of the blue. I was pretty badly damaged after that, and it ended eleven years of racing.

However, Calabogie racetrack had opened up a few years earlier just west of Ottawa and I thought it wasn't such a bad consolation prize to just do track days close to home for the rest of my life. I even dropped down a speed category for the track days and I was enjoying it just fine.

Friday Morning

I woke up early at the cottage and drove the 100 kilometres to Calabogie. The sky was dark and spitting rain.

"We have thunderstorms scheduled for our afternoon endurance race," Alan said. Hmm, I wasn't looking forward to a rain race. Dry asphalt is my preference. "But don't worry, I have rain tires already mounted on rims." Okay, not so bad, I could just ride around slowly on the rain tires and we'd still score some good points as I imagine not many people had rain tires for the little bikes.

At the 8 a.m. riders' meeting, the VRRA explained the rules, the flags and their expectations for the day.

MOTUL
113
Snow City
HJC
481

> “I WAS ACTUALLY GOING TO TRY HARD TODAY AND NOT PULL OVER DURING THE TWO HOUR RACE ON THE BACK SECTION OF THE TRACK FOR A HALF HOUR NAP”

BOYD
48
ROCKET

Good, safe, clean riding and a two-hour Endurance race at 3 p.m. My expectations were that I’d have wet socks from the afternoon thunderstorms.

Alan’s been having a blast since he bought a 2018 Yamaha R3 for racing. He still brings with him a modern 600 race bike for doing Pro 600 races, but he really enjoys the R3. Alan also reverses the shift pattern on his race bikes to a GP shift pattern. So you have to lift up on the shifter to shift down. It’s a common thing that some racers do, as it allows you to just click down when you’re leaned over in a corner and accelerating for, say, a straight stretch. I have many street bikes and I never adopted GP shift on my race bikes to keep my feeble brain from being overwhelmed. Kevin Schwantz didn’t use it either, but Alan Burns does.

Friday Morning Practice

I am slow nowadays. I’m slow enough that I told Alan he’d have to break his own track record by 15 seconds per lap to make up for the deficit I’d be putting on our times as a team.

“Nope, I no longer hold the lap record,” lamented Alan. “Some kid last month did a 2:22. I can’t touch that.”

“Benjamin Button wouldn’t give up that easily!” I encouraged him.

The Walker family came over to say hi before we headed out on the track. Dave Walker races his Ninja 400 with his two sons Cameron and Jared on their own Ninja 400s. Not only are they all blindingly fast but they’re very lean as well. It reminded me I need to cut back on my favourite food groups: bread and chocolate.

I took the bike out for the first practice session. Clouds were dark and threatened rain. About two laps in I was starting to feel really comfortable on the bike and I had remembered the backwards shifting pattern pretty much perfectly.

The Dunlop supplier didn’t have any new tires for the small bikes (just one of our many Covid-related shortages in these years) so we were using an old set of slicks that Alan dug out of his shed. Slicks are perfectly round tires with no rain grooves in them at all which gives them optimal traction for dry asphalt conditions hence people like them for racing. However, no grooves also makes them optimal for crashing if there is water on the asphalt.

Once I was feeling comfortable, it started to rain. Just spitting rain on my visor but, if I’ve learned anything from racing, it could be spitting here and pouring rain at the other end of the track. And pouring rain with slick tires is not a good combination. Thankfully it just spat rain for the next four laps as I finished the session.

“I didn’t really like the rain. It made me nervous,” I said as I returned to the pits.

“Nothing to worry about. It was just spitting. It was never going to rain hard,” Alan said. His ability to predict the future is amazingly precise when we’re actually in that future.

Medal Motivation

Alan had forgotten about my medal from last year and presented me with the Team Shoulder Check medal for winning the Covid-shortened 2021 Endurance Race series. I was amazed as I had forgotten we won the series. I was so enamoured with the medal that it put a little spring in my step and I promised Alan I was actually going to try hard today and not pull over during the two hour race on the back section of the track for a half hour nap.

It’s true: we actually won the championship. It’s also true that the three teams that beat us at CTMP failed to show up at Shannonville. Hey, sometimes you do get an award for good attendance!

Alan took the next practice session; I was hoping for a dry session for him.

"The quickshifter is not working," Alan said after his morning practice session.

"What, that thing has a quickshifter?" I asked.

"You didn't know that?" he replied. "You raced on this all last summer."

"Well, you didn't tell me," I countered. "I've been shifting properly the whole time, using the clutch and shutting off the gas for every upshift. That should save me one second a lap. Now you'll only have to go 14 seconds per lap faster to make up for my slow lap times!" I was pretty sure that was sound advice for Alan.

> "I STEPPED UP INSTEAD OF DOWN. OR WAS IT DOWN INSTEAD OF UP? I HAD NO IDEA ANYMORE WHICH WAY TO STEP FOR SHIFTING"

"Yeah, well, it's not working."

"Okay, scratch that," I said. You'll still have to go 15 seconds faster…" Sometimes it's important to point out the obvious.

Fellow Racers

Jared Walker wandered over for advice on a better ride through some corners. He couldn't figure out Corners 17, 18, 19 and 20, a slow-moving carousel right before the front straight. The question was aimed at Alan but I confidently fielded it between bites of my apple. "Not to worry," I said, "those are slow corners so just make sure you're set up well for the exit onto the front straight."

"SLOW?" Alan snapped. "Those are fast corners. I'm tapped out in fourth gear going through there."

"Well, I'm just happy I can remember how to shift gears…" Oops. Clearly *someone* was going way faster than me. I made a mental note to try to go faster there.

Race Start

These vintage endurance races are a blast. There might only be five or six teams entered in our Modern Lightweight class, but all classes are racing together in the same two-hour race, so the grid is full with approximately 35 bikes. One of the entries was on Michel Mercier's old Superbike. It's an interesting mixture of skilled veterans, average racers and new racers. The VRRA offers a very un-intimidating

That tire was working hard.

way to enter into racing with this endurance series.

I gridded in my slot near the back of the whole pack and when the green flag dropped, I waited for the racers around me to start taking off before I took off. My goal was to ride through the first two corners no faster or slower than the riders around me. At the race start, bikes can get all bunched up in the first few corners, and I was very aware that I couldn't win the race on the first lap, but I could certainly lose it.

Once safely through the first four corners, I started accelerating and passing riders. I gave people lots of room and safely passed about five riders over the next two laps. The bikes I could keep in sight were a complete mixture of brands and eras like another R3, plenty of Kawasaki 400s, a GPZ 550, EX 500, FZR 400 and some two-stroke 1970's bikes I couldn't identify. This was a race and I was trying desperately to catch the riders in front. I was getting exhausted trying to catch Dave Walker on his Kawasaki 400 but I just couldn't close the gap.

Lap after lap I gave Alan the thumbs up as I motored past him on the front straight. He was at the pit wall waving encouragement or maybe he was waving for me to speed up. Either way, I thought a thumbs-up would please him and disguise my level of confusion.

Remember the Shifting Pattern

Halfway through my one-hour stint I realized the riding was going really well. Nice and smooth, the bike felt well planted with the Öhlins suspension and I exited 14 to go left and uphill, gave a long shoulder check to see that no one was behind me, stepped down to upshift two gears and sailed nicely downhill through The Spoon into 16, dropped down another gear and sailed into 17 hard on the brakes. And then I shifted the wrong way. Upshift instead of two downshifts.

I stepped up instead of down. Or was it down instead of up? I had no idea anymore which way to step for shifting. Certainly not hard on the engine but it killed any drive to be in sixth gear through the Carousel instead of third or fourth. I fumbled with the shifter at full lean and entered the front straight at jogging speed but in fifth gear. As I slowly motored down the front straight in the low end of fifth I wanted to shout out to Alan that I beat his fourth gear Carousel ride — I did it in sixth!!!

125
CATHY
113
Pat Boyd and Alan Burns celebrate their 2021 Endurance Championship.

Instead, unsure of his level of satisfaction with my sixth gear heroics, I burbled by him without looking at him on the pit wall. I thought it wiser to stare straight ahead in a full tuck in an attempt to make it *look* like I was moving fast. Other race bikes rocketed past me as I continued my slow motion travel down the front straight, since clearly I was in my own little black and white movie surrounded by super-fast speed bikes and I needed full concentration.

I don't know if Alan was convinced of my super-human speed or if he was considering grinding my 2021 medal into ash.

Racing Continues

Near the end of my one-hour stint, in Corner 3 a green cruise missile went rocketing by me. Being on the track for a full hour I had the opportunity to get passed by pretty much everyone, but no one passed me in any corner that fast. The corner speed of this green missile was unreal. I saw the name Walker stenciled on the white leathers and Cam Walker gave me a friendly wave from the perch of his Kawasaki 400. I was surprised he took his hand off the bars as I thought he would have needed it to type the coordinates into the Nav Computer for his light speed jump to Corner 5. Clearly, he had already entered those coordinates because by the time I got to Corner 4 there was no longer any sight of him.

My hour was up and the pit stop was seamless. I was so tired after an hour that I could barely open the gas cap (my only job for the pit stop) as our friend Glenn Cauley held the fire extinguisher and Alan gassed up the bike. Then Alan hopped on and rode one full hour at lap record speed. Lap after lap he brought us closer to the lead of our Lightweight pack. In the end, we finished third in our group but happy that we gave it 100 per cent and had a ton of fun.

I left the track fully exhausted and in need of a shower. What a fantastic day at the racetrack. On the 80-minute drive back to the cottage, I stopped in Burnstown for ice cream then was refreshed with a swim in the lake. On my way to bed that night, I stubbed my toe on the door frame and it throbbed in pain as I fell asleep. I slept a solid 10 hours that night. I hadn't slept that well in months. **MM**

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF VRRA RACING
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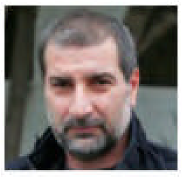
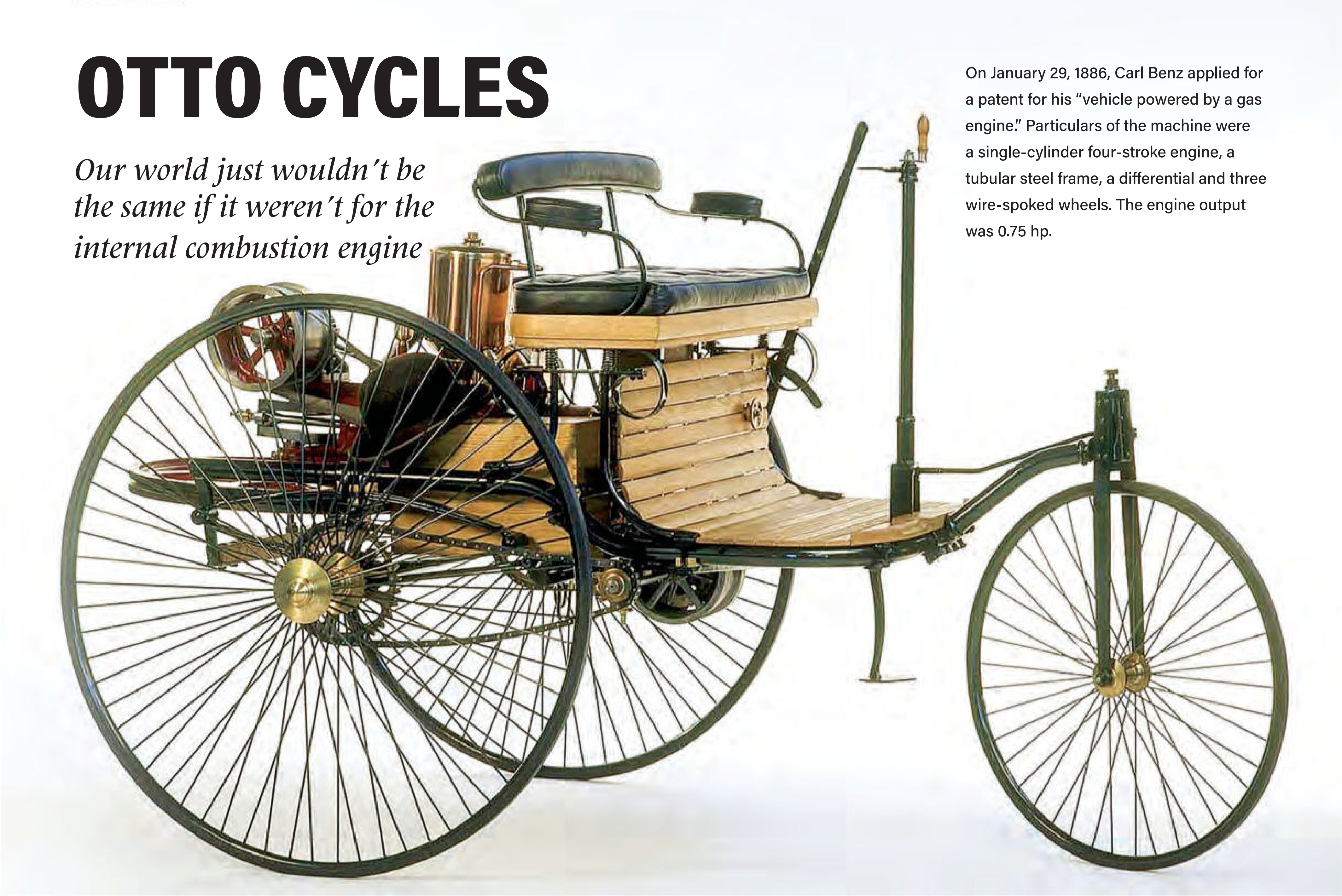


MOJO **GARAGE**

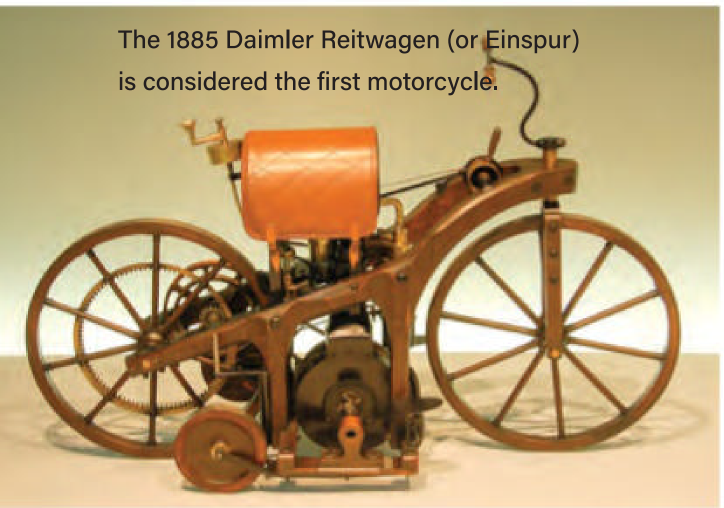
BY **COSTA MOUZOURIS**

OTTO CYCLES

Our world just wouldn't be the same if it weren't for the internal combustion engine



On January 29, 1886, Carl Benz applied for a patent for his "vehicle powered by a gas engine." Particulars of the machine were a single-cylinder four-stroke engine, a tubular steel frame, a differential and three wire-spoked wheels. The engine output was 0.75 hp.



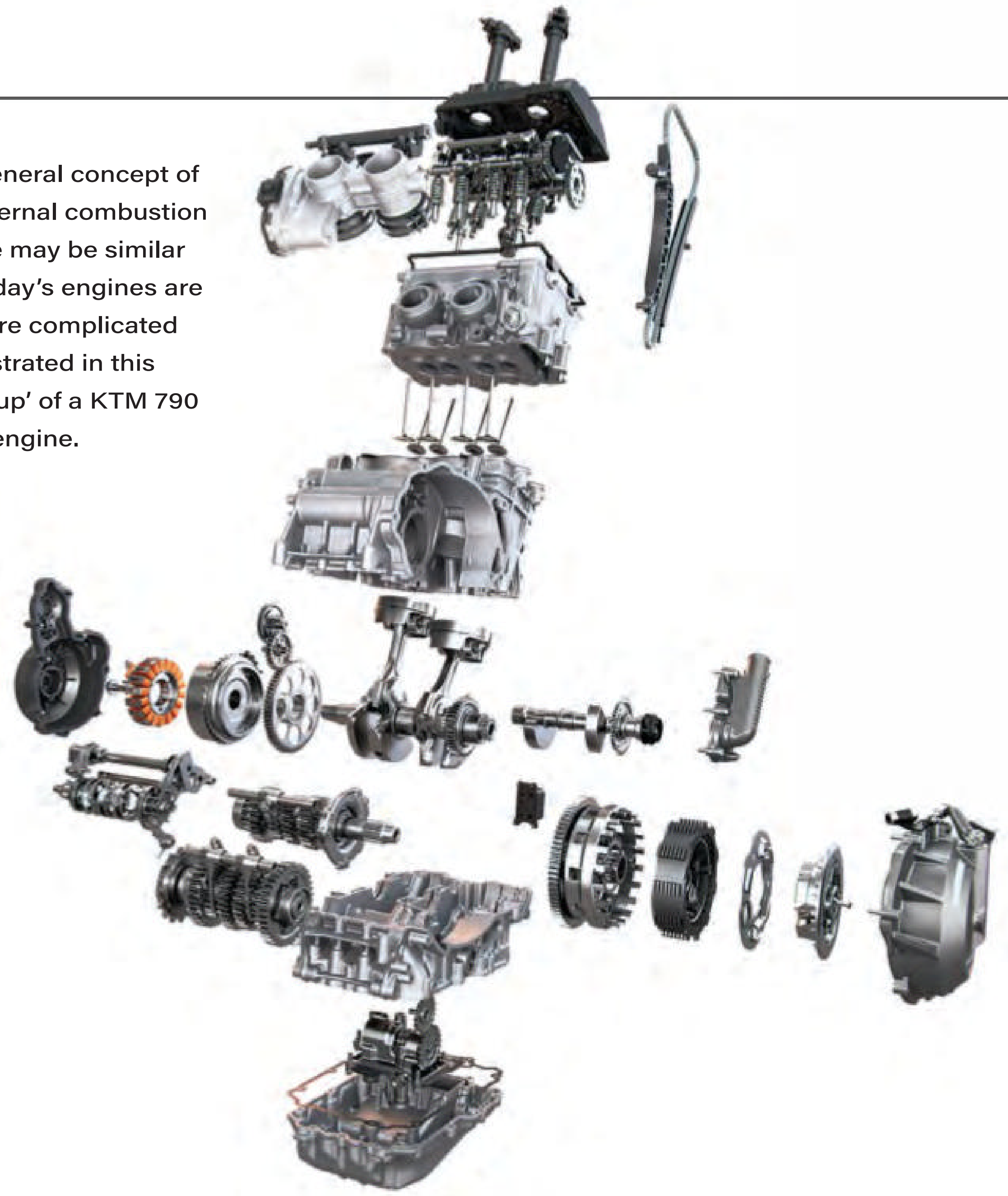
The 1885 Daimler Reitwagen (or Einspur) is considered the first motorcycle.

I freely admit to my obsession with the internal combustion engine, particularly with the four-stroke variation. Fortunately, I have chosen the motorcycle as the device with which to enjoy the sounds, smells and feel of the internal combustion engine. Sadly, due to its unsavoury relationship with nature, the gasoline-powered engine is on its way out. It has, however, served mankind and dominated the transportation industry — and much, much more — for more than a century.

The internal combustion engine serves a simple purpose: It converts heat into motion. To do this, it uses the expansion of heated air — produced by igniting a fuel and air mixture — to push on a piston inside a sealed, cylindrical chamber. The reciprocating motion of the piston is converted to rotating motion by connecting it via a rod to a crankshaft, a device invented by a mechanically minded genius named Leonardo da Vinci. That rotating motion can then be used to drive a number of things, from wheels to propellers to electric generators, and on and on.

If it were not for the efforts of a few brilliant engineers who dedicated their time to help develop this simple device, we would probably still be riding in horse-drawn carriages. Okay, maybe something else would have eventually been invented that would facilitate travel, but it cannot be ignored that the invention of the internal combustion engine changed the course of mankind.

French engineer Alphonse Beau de Rochas patented the concept of the four-stroke cycle engine in 1862, but he never built one. A few years before this, Belgian inventor Jean Étienne Lenoir had developed the two-stroke engine, and actually had a working model by 1862. In 1861, German engineer Nikolaus August Otto was also working on a two-stroke engine based on Lenoir's design, but his first attempt at a running model failed almost immediately. This prompted him to look at alternatives, and he turned his focus on Rochas' four-stroke cycle design. While the four-stroke engine contained more parts than the two stroke, and it lost one revolution in order to complete the four strokes



The general concept of the internal combustion engine may be similar but today's engines are far more complicated as illustrated in this 'blow-up' of a KTM 790 Duke engine.

IMAGE COURTESY OF KTM

— intake, compression, combustion, exhaust — it ultimately proved more reliable and more efficient thermally. It has therefore dominated engine production ever since, in a multitude of layouts, and for countless applications.

The four-stroke cycle engine — or the Otto Cycle engine as it is also known — revolutionized transportation. While automobiles were early recipients of the internal-combustion engine, motorcycles were there first. This engine was compact enough that in 1885 it prompted Gottlieb Daimler to put one in a bicycle-like vehicle that had a pair of tandem wheels and a pair of smaller outrigger wheels, thus producing what is widely considered the grandfather of gasoline-powered motorcycles.

A year later, Carl Benz made his first public appearance in his patented "vehicle powered by a gas engine." It was a single-cylinder, four-stroke three-wheeler, which by today's standards would still be considered a motorcycle.

While motorcycles were relatively affordable in the early 20th century, making them the primary gas-powered vehicles as opposed to automobiles (which were reserved for more affluent road users), Henry Ford changed that with his invention, the assembly line, which produced the cheap, abundant Model T. From that point on, the motorcycle became more of a novelty than a primary source of transportation.

Visionaries Orville and Wilbur Wright also saw the potential of Otto's engine, and they put a propeller on the end of the crankshaft of a four-cylinder engine, and launched the first powered flying machine into the air in 1903 — coincidentally, the same year Harley-Davidson was founded.

While that first flight left the ground for only 120 feet and lasted 12 seconds, their wood-and-linen aeroplane would push others into the sky, and eventually lead to putting a man on the moon. Although spacecraft is not powered by an internal-combustion piston engine, space flight would not be possible today if the Wrights hadn't experimented in that field in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. And that wouldn't have happened if it weren't for the gears turning in Otto's head.

Why am I obsessed with the internal combustion engine? Well, I couldn't ride a motorcycle without it. At least not one that feels like a living, breathing thing; vibrating, producing heat, and taking me wherever I want to go. When sitting on a motorcycle, you are intimately close to the engine; your legs straddle it; your arms extend forward above it. It is not hidden beneath a hood; it is out in the open, on display as a central design piece. It is an intricate part of the riding experience; its sound, power pulses and vibration often tuned by its designers to give it character.

I do understand and respect the move to protect the environment and the air we breathe, but I'm also glad we're not done with pistons just yet. **MM**

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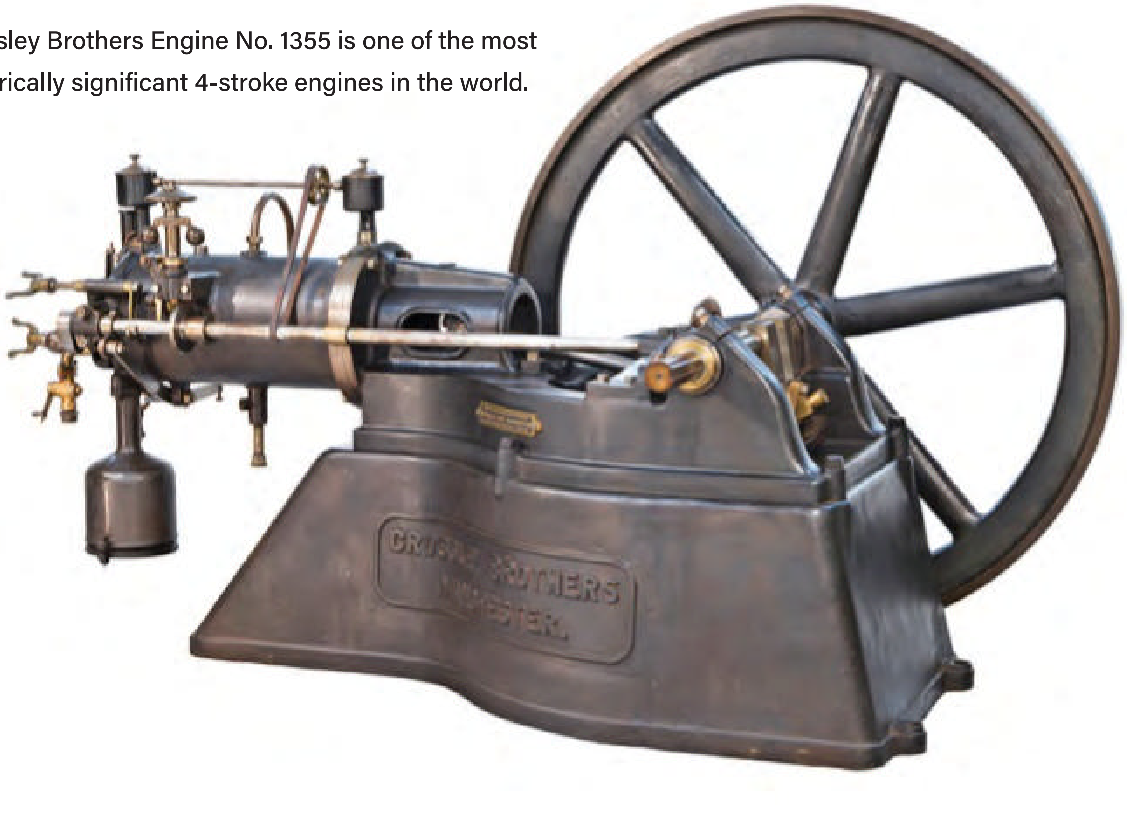

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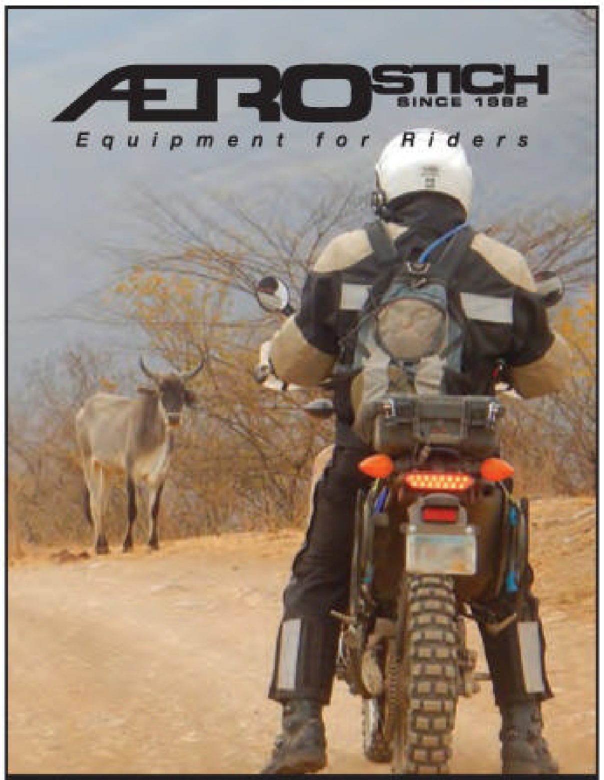

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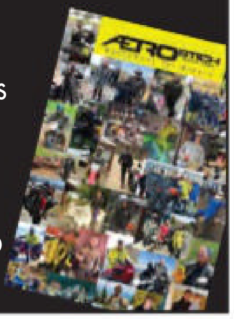

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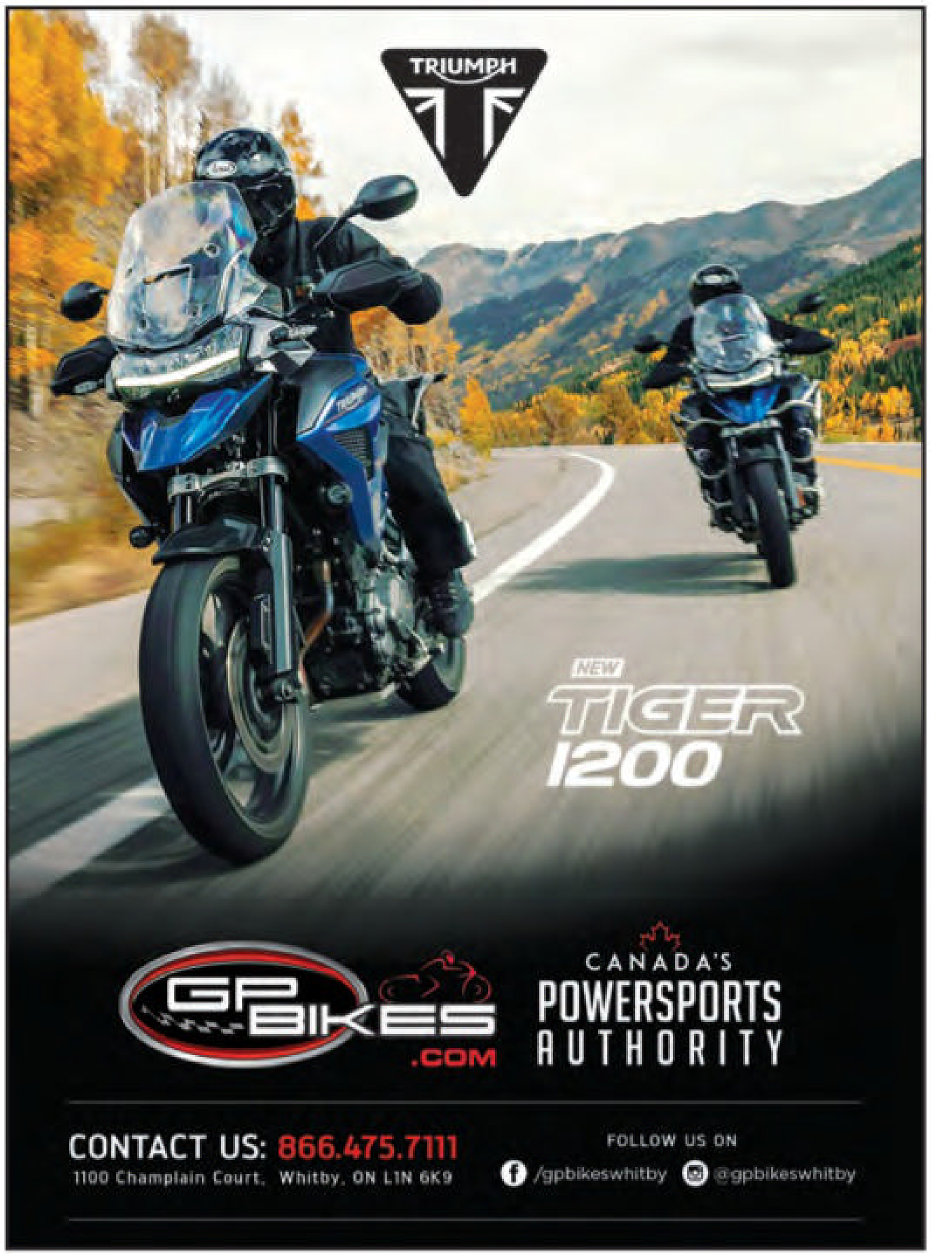
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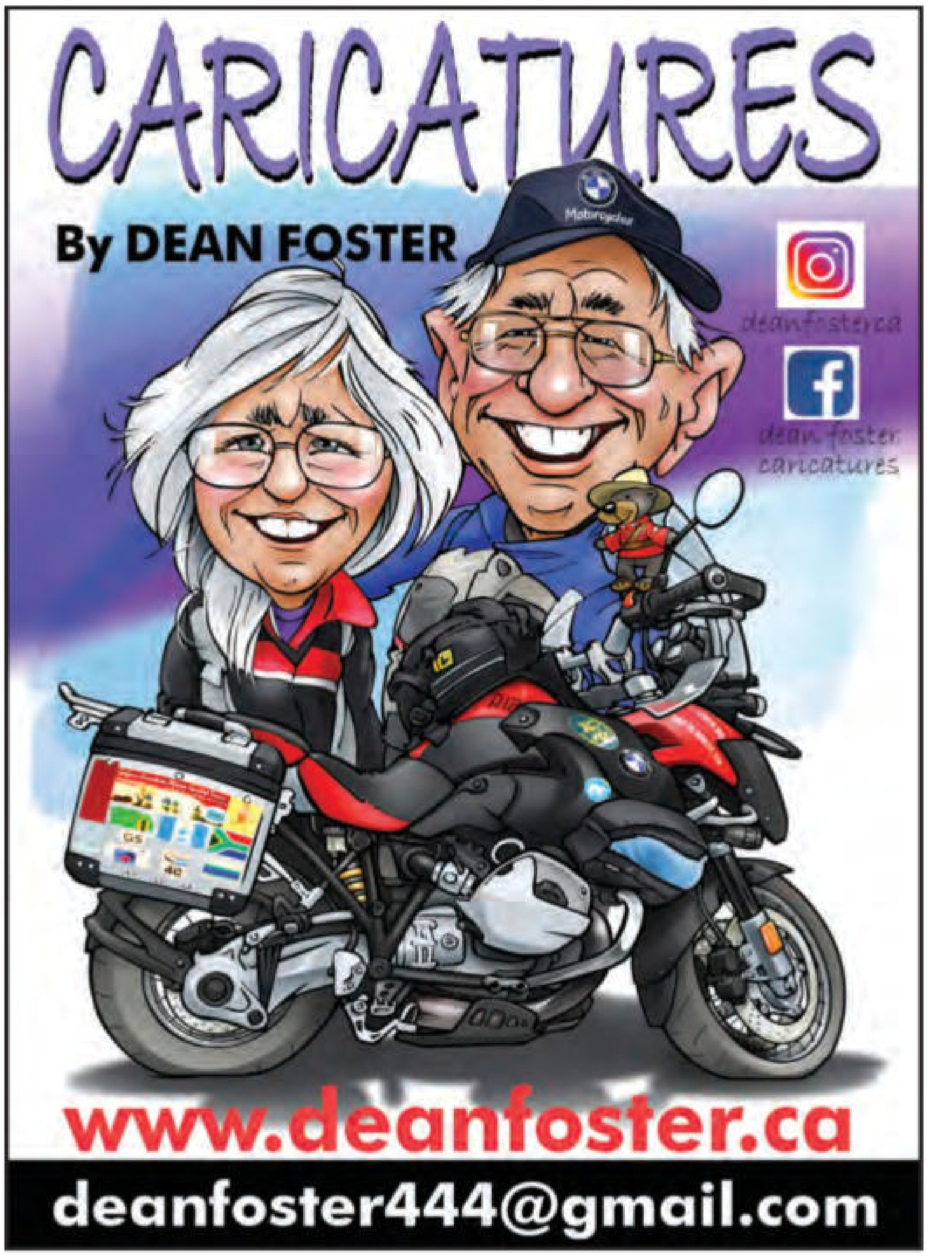
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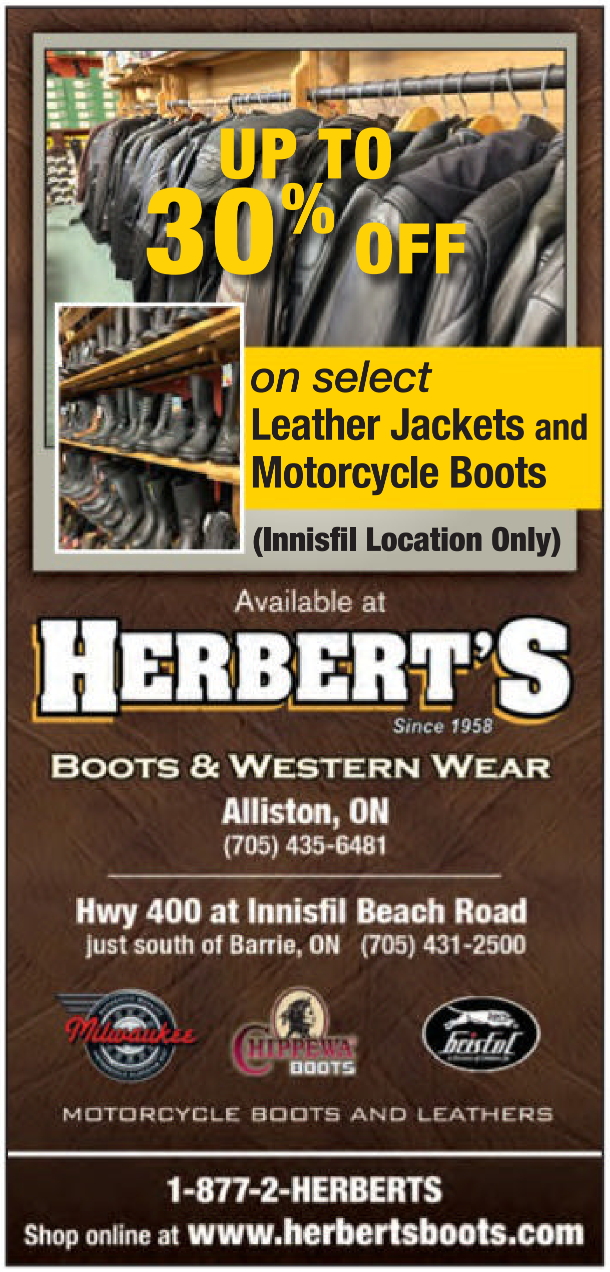

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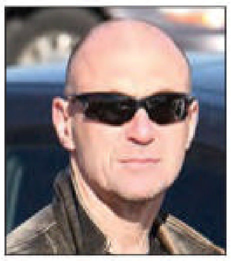

THE **LAST WORD**

BY **DAVID BOOTH**

HOW FAR WE'VE COME

A little more than a month ago, an example of the world's first gasoline-fuelled production motorcycle sold at a Bonhams auction. This particular 1894 Hildebrand and Wolfmüller, engine number 69, is thought to be the earliest example of a motorcycle that you or I — or, more accurately, our ancestors — could have bought just by walking into a shop. It sold for almost £200,000, or more than CDN$300,000.

Now, the Hildebrand and Wolfmüller is not the world's first production bike. There were some — I wouldn't say plenty — steam-powered two-wheelers operating as much as 30 years earlier. Nor was it the first gas-fuelled motorcycle, that honour belonging to the famous Gottlieb Daimler's gasoline-engined Einspur built in 1885. But that was a one-off.

The Hildebrand and Wolfmüller — with estimates of its entire production being anywhere between 800 and 2,000 — was the first fossil-fuelled production motorcycle. In other words, it's the perfect foil to look back at how far we've come, lo these last 129 years.

The first thing you should know is that the world's first gasoline production bike was a four-stroke, not a two-stroke ring-a-ding. A four-stroke twin, in fact, its displacement a hefty 1,488 cubic centimetres.

That doesn't mean it was a powerhouse. Hildebrand and Wolfmüller boasted just two horsepower. Even more incredibly, its redline was barely 240 rpm. As we've recently covered, you can walk into any local Kawasaki store today and, with less than CAD$10,000, buy a little ZX-4R, which, if you Woolich ECU-flash its silly restrictions, will spin to 16,000 rpm. Our idle is five times yesteryear's redline, and even a cheap little tiddler can spin almost 70 times as high. If you're looking for the shortest possible synopsis of piston-powered modernity, you need read no further.

That's not all its pre-Mesozoic absurdities. Transmissions, clutches and chain drives not yet invented, Hildebrand and Wolfmüller bypassed the whole "powertrain" shebang and just connected the pistons directly to the rear wheel. Indeed, the rear wheel is both the crankshaft and the flywheel. You see, the connecting rods go all the way from the horizontal cylinders to the rear wheel, where there's a slight offset arm — the crank "journal" that creates the "stroke" — that connects to the rear axle which, as I said, works as a crankshaft proper. That, as I mentioned, means the solid rear wheel also doubles as the flywheel. And, no, there's no clutch. One presumes that, at the dawn of motoring, there were precious few stoplights and the few interruptions to forward travel could be handled by doing donuts until the obstruction passed.

The other thing that intrigues about this most ancient of production bikes is its hot-tube ignition system. Before the advent of the first spark plugs — and the magnetos that triggered them — combustion was initiated by what was essentially a Bunsen burner. Yes, you read that right. That most primitive of heating devices, the ones that were included in the "ages 3 to 6" chemistry sets of my youth, is that which ignited the fuel mixture on the compression stroke.

Essentially, said Bunsen burner heated up a tube, usually made of platinum, protruding into the cylinder wall. Start-up required firing the Bunsen burner with methylated spirits, shutting down the system literally required blowing out the burner and the placement of the tube in the cylinder wall determined ignition timing. Said timing was, no imagination needed, neither rapid nor accurate; hence that redline of 240 revs.

Nor was it particularly reliable, the ignition systems of the day requiring frequent repair. Thankfully, that required little more than replacing a wick or, in a pinch, the entire platinum tube. Occasionally, one of the asbestos washers that sealed the tube-cylinder wall interface — you wouldn't want to lose any of the meagre compression the Hildebrand and Wolfmüller boasted, now would you — would fail. But you could diagnose that by — don't try this at home, kids — by pouring gas into the cylinder and then lighting a match near the suspected leak to see if the spewing gas caught fire. Ah, the good ole days; when men were men and mechanics self-immolated!

The Hildebrand and Wolfmüller wasn't all crudity. The engine, for instance, was liquid-cooled, a technology that would not become fully commonplace until at least a hundred years later. Better yet, the rear fender served as radiator, a weight-savings even the latest superbikes haven't yet mastered. And the oil was carried in the frame. Yes, despite Erik Buell's claim to innovation, the world's very first production motorcycle used its frame tube as an oil reservoir. Ignition systems may have come a long way, baby, but oil tanks, not so much.

Nonetheless, top speed was limited to 50 km/h and braking accomplished by a wooden block rubbing against the front tire. Startup was pushing the bike fast enough for the combustion process to be initiated and then hopping aboard. In other words, the starting line procedure of early Grand Prix racing.

We live in a golden age of internal combustion motorcycling, the lowliest of production bikes far beyond even the imagination of the earliest engineers. Let's hope that the electric motorcycles that are claimed to be our future progress at an even faster pace. **MM**

NEXT ISSUE June 2023

LAND OF COVERED BRIDGES AND RUGGED COASTLINES

If you've ever considered a ride through beautiful New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, you won't want to miss the June issue. Eric Taylor describes his travels through the sparsely populated provinces where traffic is almost non-existent. Some of the ride's highlights were the Fundy Trail Parkway, with spectacular views of the Bay of Fundy and its rugged coastline, and the many covered bridges that New Brunswick is so well-known for.

2023 DUCATI STREETFIGHTER V4S

What happens when you take a 205-horsepower naked bike that features the latest in electronic ride controls to a racetrack? As we discovered while thrashing the 2023 Ducati Streetfighter V4S around Spain's technically challenging Andalucia Circuit, it is a heart-pounding, grin-stretching hoot to ride. Read about it in the next issue.

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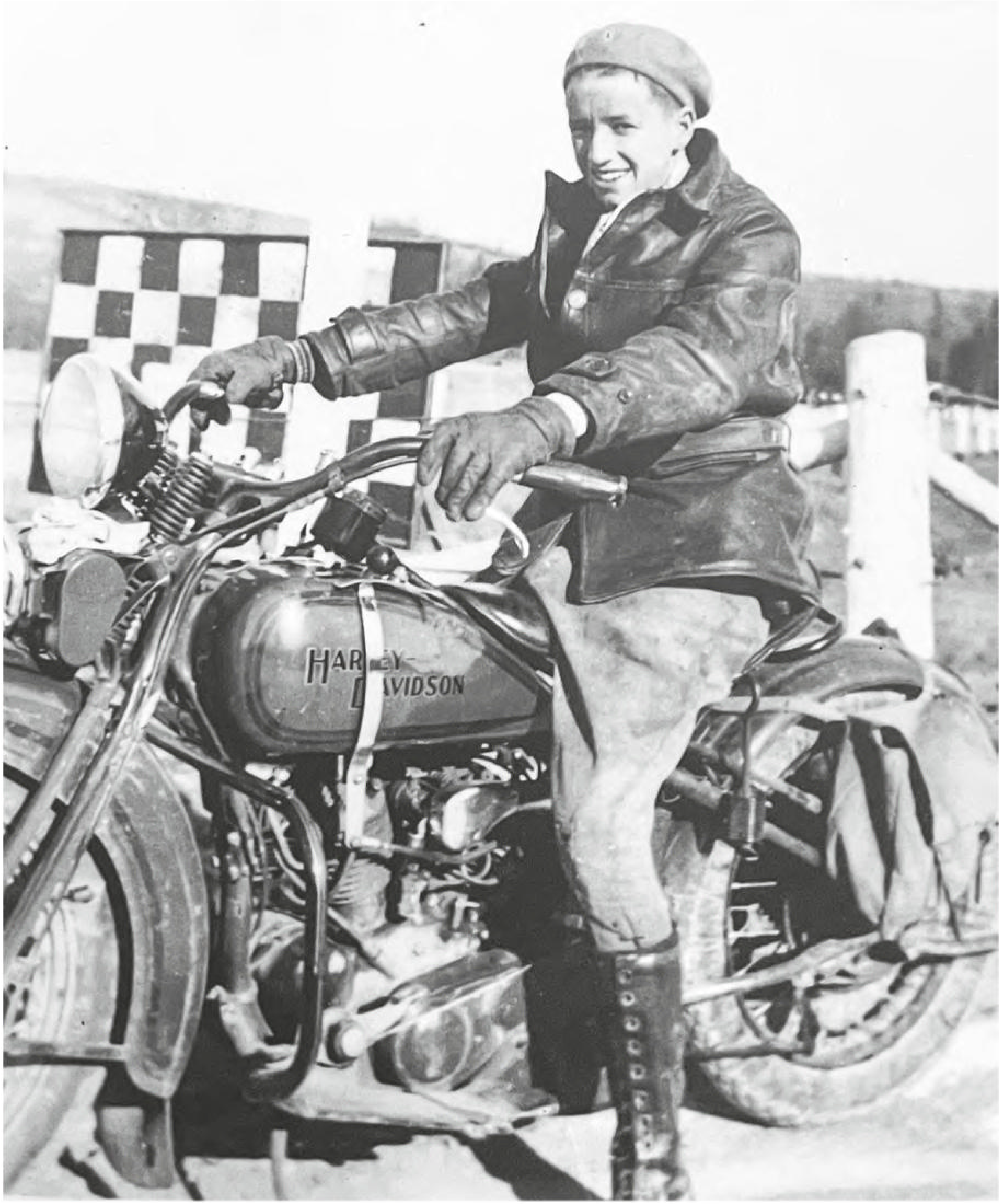

This is a photo of my dad, Jack Clift. Although he never owned his own motorcycle, that didn't stop him from riding his brother's 1937 Harley-Davidson. One day, he and a friend decided to visit the Milwaukee Harley-Davidson factory. Because of road conditions at the time, it took them 3½ days to get there from Toronto, but once they arrived, they were given a full tour of the facility. On returning to their Harleys, they were pleasantly surprised to discover that, while on their tour, both motorcycles had been washed, oil checked and fully gassed up for their return trip home. No charge!

— Submitted by Steven Clift

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